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SERMONS,

ON THE

BOOK OF COMMON-PRAYER,

AND ADMINISTRATION OF

THE SACRAMENTS,

AND

OTHER RITES AND CEREMONIES OF THE CHURCH,

ACCORDING TO THE USE OF THE

United Church of England and Ireland.

BY THE

REV. JOHN H. PINDER, M.A.

CURATE OF THE PARISH OF ST. MARY, LAMBETH.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermons have been published, at the desire of some members of the Congregation of St. Mary, Lambeth, in which they were delivered. The Author cannot but fear, lest, among the many excellent treatises on the same subject, this little Volume may be deemed superfluous. Yet, with the hope of these discourses promoting (from a local interest in their behalf) a closer study of the Liturgy—and that pure spirit of devotion, diffused throughout the Common Prayer—and a deeper reverence for, and acquaintance with, the Church—he humbly commends them to the blessing of the Giver of all grace.

Lambeth, May 27, 1837.

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SERMON I.

HISTORY OF THE LITURGY.

PSALM xcvi. 9.

“WORSHIP THE LORD IN THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.”

It is natural for a person on taking up a book to inquire, Who wrote this book? When was it written? What is the subject of it? If the book be on a matter of importance, such questions are still more needful. If, on the sacred Scripture, or connected with the public worship, or instruction of the Church, inquiry becomes a matter of still greater consequence. True it is, that every one has not the time, or ability for such investigation. And, therefore, the authorized ministers of God's word are bound to bring forward such

topics, as may tend to explain the Scripture, and to promote devotion.

In this point of view, eminently, stands forth the book of Common Prayer—entitled Common, because all the congregation join in it. I would rather say, *ought* to join : for it is one of the marks of coldness in our age, compared with that of the Primitive Christians, that a very large part of the congregation, merely whisper the responses, which, according to the direction of the rubric, it is their duty to utter aloud. And, indeed, if it were not for the appointment of a person, whose office it is to make the responses ; and for the voices of the children composing our schools, we should in many places of worship, have no responses at all.

I. I purpose in this discourse, drawing your attention to the history of our Common Prayer. When it pleased God, by a most unexpected train of causes, to remove from this land, the corruptions, which had gradually been entwined around the

Apostolic Church ;—when the Reformers proceeded to cast away the unscriptural doctrines, and the superstitious forms, which the Roman branch of the Christian Church had been upholding for so long a time, a desire arose in the hearts of our spiritual rulers, that the Common Prayer should be no longer in Latin ; so that the people might understand what was contained in the prayers used by them.

It was about three hundred years ago when the church of this land was enabled, by throwing aside this, and other corruptions, such as having the Scriptures in an unknown tongue ; denying the cup of blessing, in the Lord's supper, to all save the clergy ; paying worship, of some kind, to the Virgin and to saints ;—by setting aside these and other errors, to return to the state of the early church in doctrine and in government.

The object of our reformers was, not to sweep away indiscriminately, every thing which had belonged to the Church, while

under the power of Rome. They would not cut away that which might be preserved and healed ; they removed only those errors, which had arisen, from neglect of Scripture, and disregard to the traditional customs of the primitive Christians. They did not proclaim—we will have none of this Liturgy, because parts of it have been used by the Romish Church : but, we will purge it of all that is contrary to God's word, and all that is opposed to the pure rules of the Church in the times of the Apostles, and their early successors. We will bring the services back to the state in which they were before the errors of Popery. They referred to the Common Prayer of the Church of Jerusalem (for there is no doubt of there having been a Liturgy established by the Apostles themselves¹.) They referred to the Common Prayer of Alexandria, of Antioch, of the Church of Ephesus, and the Liturgy of the south of France.

¹ Vid. Palmer's *Origines Liturgicæ*.

Thus, duly reverencing public prayers which had been transmitted through these churches, from St. James, St. Peter, St. John, and St. Mark ; and adopting parts from the *ancient* Roman, and Eastern churches, they were prepared to give the nation a service—simple, lively, spiritual, affectionate, reasonable, and sublime.

But, this work was not done in haste. The Fathers of our church proceeded cautiously and reverentially in their task. First, they disseminated a book, with some forms of devotion (yea, and some remaining errors therein) called the “Godly and pious institution of a Christen man.” When the leaven, introduced by this, had worked for a season, another volume came forth with corrections, entitled “a necessary doctrine and erudition for any Christen man.” Soon afterwards, a book called the King’s Primer, was published by authority ; containing the Lord’s prayer, the ten commandments, the belief, the hymns —“O come let us sing unto the Lord,”

and “We praise thee, O God,” &c. These were preparations of the public mind. A course of training was thus adopted, for a people, who had been accustomed to listen to the Scripture, in an unknown language; and to offer prayers in a tongue, which they did not comprehend.

In the year 1547, a great advance was made. The pious king Edward the sixth, anxious for the promotion of true religion, issued orders for composing an uniform order of Communion, according to the rules of Scripture and the Primitive Church. The service for the Lord’s Supper, was, accordingly, provided in English: and the communicants now, for the first time, understood the words of the solemn ministration, and received the cup of the Lord. This cup of blessing, the priests had for a long period, contrary to the rule of the Primitive Church, and to the very words of our Saviour, “Drink ye ALL of this¹,” re-

¹ Matt. xxvi. 27.

served entirely to themselves. This office for the Lord's Supper then, was the first, which was prepared in the mother tongue. This was no sooner accomplished, than the nation, nourished by this comfortable sustenance for the soul, was admitted yet to another rich feast of devotion : for within a few months, the forms of prayer for Sunday, and for other holy days, fasts, and festivals, were added : and in the year 1548, the Common Prayer was used in our churches, complete in the language of the nation.

As long as our Bishops, and other divines, acted according to their own cautious judgment, the progress of religion was great. But on their calling in the aid of some learned men from the continent (though this was done in an humble and conciliating temper), scruples and doubts began to spread abroad ; and the impression, heightened by extravagant admiration of the foreign Reformers, that the book of prayer had not receded far enough from Popish

error, gained ground. Suffice it to state, however, that, at this time, the service, which had formerly begun with the Lord's Prayer, was made, not injudiciously, to commence with those passages from Scripture, "When the wicked man," &c. The exhortation, the confession of sin, and the absolution, were added; and some omissions were made in the occasional services.

The reign of Queen Mary checked the progress of the reformed religion, and deluged the country with the blood of bishops and priests, rich and poor, learned and ignorant. But, the scourge was removed in a few years. And then, our Common Prayer, having undergone some alterations—in the service for the Eucharist, in the omission in the Litany, of an expression, referring to the errors and tyranny of Rome, (but too severe for the language of prayer,) and in the selection of the Lessons, was established in the Churches. The sacred vestments of the ministers were retained; but, care was

taken, that while simplicity was adhered to, a due solemnity, and decent order, should be preserved.

When James the First came to the throne, it was feared, that his regard for the Scottish Church, (being under Presbyterian discipline) would have induced him to favour reforms, injurious to the character of a church, established on Episcopal authority. But, after a patient investigation of objections, before a council composed of Episcopal and Presbyterian Divines, the King himself presiding, they were for the most part overruled. In this year, the beautiful general thanksgiving was inserted in the Liturgy; and the explanation of the Sacraments in the catechism, and the service of thanksgiving for the preservation of the king and parliament on the fifth of November, were added.

In 1649, it will be remembered, that king Charles the Martyr was murdered, under a show of justice, by his rebel and ungodly subjects. The Church was overthrown by its enemies; and a most tyran-

nical dominion, under the name of a popular government, was substituted in the stead of our free and happy constitution.

But what thanks can we return to God for restoring our Church and Monarchy! while our Common Prayer, which, the party in power during the usurpation, would not allow churchmen to use¹, again became a blessing to the nation. Then the Lord indeed turned the captivity of Zion, and filled the hearts of the people with joy. "Yea he did great things, whereof they rejoiced." "They had sown in tears, but reaped in joy²."

A meeting was held A. D. 1661 between the chief non-conformist divines, and a body of our bishops and eminent fathers in the ministry, with the hope of establishing

¹ Bishop Jer. Taylor, in a Preface to a Collection of Offices, intended as a substitution for the proscribed Liturgy, says, "These Prayers being intended only as a charitable ministry to them, *who are not permitted to use those which were appointed formerly,*" &c. Vol. xv. p. 241.

² Psalm cxxvi. 5.

the church in unity. But peace was in vain sought after.

Some additions were made, at that time, to the Common Prayer. The sublime intercession, the first words of which are, "O God the Creator," &c., the prayer for a blessing on the consultations of Parliament, the prayer for faithful ministers, to be used in Ember weeks, the office of Baptism for grown persons, the prayers to be offered at sea, the service for King Charles's martyrdom, and thanksgiving for the restoration of the church and throne, were incorporated into our prayer book. Some changes were also made in the lessons; and several collects underwent an alteration. This was the last revisal. In this form, the Prayer Book has continued. It has waited as a handmaid on the Bible. It has been translated into various languages of the earth. It yet exalts the souls of the congregation to the throne of the Lord, while it cheers the couch of the sick, and the bed of the dying. It has been pronounced the least

imperfect of human compositions, by those, who are opposed to the use of it in public worship : and it is not saying too much to declare our belief, that He, from whom cometh down all wisdom and grace, did vouchsafe his Holy Spirit to guide the minds of the compilers into the ways of truth and lowly piety. It is not too much to assert, that by the use of the creeds and articles embodied in, and harmonizing with, the devotional forms, it has tended to keep the Church primitive in its government, and pure in doctrine.

Let me again remind you of the reverence for ancient forms, shown by the compilers of the Common Prayer. Almost every collect is taken from ancient liturgies. The Litany likewise. The service for Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, and other offices, may be traced to the old and venerable devotions of the Eastern and Western churches. The comparatively few prayers, composed by the Reformers of our church, I have already set before you.

Let me farther suggest this thought. Take away, from a common prayer book, every passage of Scripture; and how few pages would you leave! The opening sentences, most of the Hymns, the Psalms, the Epistles, and Gospels, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer are from Scripture. — What would you leave? except those heavenly compositions, some of which St. Basil, and St. Gregory, and St. Chrysostom, have indited; and some, the Apostles, themselves. What would you leave? except prayers, and supplications, and intercessions, and giving of thanks, which, from age to age, have enriched the church with piety; and form a spiritual link between the disciples of the Lord Jesus, for eighteen centuries.

II. Having thus given you a very imperfect account of the manner, and the time, in which our prayer book was compiled; and having endeavoured to impress your minds with the feeling, that it was not *a book*,

composed and written for the occasion, by our Reformers, but, most carefully selected from ancient liturgies, some of which the Apostles themselves had prepared; let me now address a few words to you, on the advantages of having a form of prayer.

1. Where could a sufficient number of men be found, possessing the gift of *such* extemporaneous prayer, as we deem due to the majesty of God, and the glory of his Son Jesus Christ? The clergy of this country are about 16,000 in number. Without detracting from a body of men, on whom (not in boasting, for we ascribe all to God) we may believe, that the Spirit of God hath been graciously poured out, I avow my conviction, that neither they, nor any others are equal to so awful a task.

2. One great advantage from a Liturgy arises, from knowing beforehand, what devotions we are going to use. Our amen is then sincere, when we are acquainted with the substance of our prayers: and our duty therein resolves itself, simply, into kindling

the devout affections, and stirring the conscience, without having to strain the mind in suddenly catching new ideas. Now if this be of consequence to all, much more so is it to those who sit at any great distance, or who may be afflicted with the distressing infirmity of deafness.

3. The very circumstance, of the same prayers being used, is most profitable ; edification, not excitement, being intended. Hence, the deep impression of faith made by the constant and reverential use of the Common Prayer ; the images of divine things being conveyed to the mind, in language which a child may often understand ; and in words, in other places, which, according to Scripture, are uttered by the Heavenly Host above. Must it not be a comfort to us, that we are following the rule of Christ himself ? Is not the Lord's prayer *a form* of devotion ? Is it not a *Liturgy*, in a few words ?

4. Must it not promote the Communion of saints to remember, that we are, (though

locally separated) “with one mind, and one mouth, glorifying God ¹?” that we are using words, which are rising to Heaven, not in the churches of Great Britain and Ireland only; but from the banks of the Ganges, the St. Lawrence, the Ohio ², in the Islands of the Pacific, and in the Western Ocean?

5. If detained at home, moreover, by sickness or affliction, the worshipper of our church can bend the knee in private; and with his book of prayer, in this case of necessity, can mingle in spirit, with the tens of thousands, who are in the sanctuary; and feel, that there is “one Lord, one Faith;” and that Christ is all in all, the head of his mystical body.

6. Another great blessing, derived from our Common Prayer, is this; that it gives a

¹ Rom. xvi. 6.

² In addition to the Ecclesiastical establishment in our several colonies, the interesting Church of the United States of America is derived through the Church of England, and is under the guidance of fifteen Bishops.

fixed character to our faith. The Bible is acknowledged as the standard of truth, by all Christians. Yet infinite, are the interpretations, given to the blessed volume. But, by placing before the mind, in the settled form of devotion, the leading truths of the Gospel, as received and handed down by the piety of the church, from age to age, we are kept stedfast in all vital doctrines. The Trinity, the atonement of the Son of God in our nature, the life-giving grace of the Comforter, the power of faith, the fruits of repentance, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, become realities to the mind.

If then we have such a talent committed to our trust, have we been duly careful in the employment of it? O! that we could behold the delightful spectacle of every seat in our churches occupied *before the service of the great God commences!* Is it not considered disrespectful

in society, to enter the house of a friend, at so late an hour, as to produce confusion among the guests? Is it not felt, that dishonour is hereby done to our host? Shall the glorious God be treated in a manner which we blush to use towards man? Doth not Scripture proclaim, that “the Lord is in his holy temple? Let all the earth keep silence before Him¹.” Is it possible, either for the minister, or the early worshippers, to avoid being disturbed, amidst the frequent opening of doors, and the passing and repassing of persons? And when? at a time, when the congregation is engaged in the very first solemn acknowledgment of sin; and waiting to receive absolution from guilt? What is it which causes this abrupt intrusion into the sanctuary? Is it with any, the fear of being too long in the courts of Him, who hath promised to be present, “where two or three are gathered together in his name².”

¹ Habb. ii. 20.

² Matt. xviii. 20.

Is it the being late, through want of arrangement in our families? Precious, are the few moments of serious recollection before the Service begins. Valuable are those thoughts, which are engaged in recalling our own particular faults, our own especial mercies, our individual need of the blood of Jesus for pardon, and of his Spirit for cleansing our souls. Much more likely are we, by calm and serious reflection, to attain unto that lowly, grateful, believing, attentive frame of mind, on which the Spirit of God loves to descend. The most regular worshipper *may* be detained by some unexpected accident; but the *custom* of being late, cannot be excused.

Rather, let me dwell on the value of that habit, which brings the Christian, early, to his seat; which finds him quietly rejoicing, as the Sabbath bells invite him to meet his Lord; and saying thus within himself, "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the

Lord¹." I speak of that frame of mind which, instead of seeking a trifling interest in whispering, and familiar salutations, and gazing around, in the house of God, is striving after conviction of unworthiness, and livelier hopes of God's mercy in Christ, and closer acquaintance with our own hearts.

True devotion is a high gift. The most religious will find their minds, sometimes, wandering. The most devout will detect themselves using the words of prayer, while their thoughts are hurried away by the veriest trifle of the moment. How delightful is it to raise, and to maintain in some measure, a fervent spirit of prayer! To preserve that state of mind, which, while realizing somewhat of the throne and presence of God, is yet enabled to make application to one's own heart, concerning guilt to be forgiven, temptations to be resisted,

¹ Psalm cxxii. 1.

and corruption to be cured. "I was in the spirit, on the Lord's day," saith St. John¹. And this exalting of our hearts towards God, as reconciled to us in Christ, and preparing us for glory, is that mental habit which we must aim after by grace, as of infinite value.

True and awful is the consideration, "that God heareth not sinners²." And therefore, for any man to come into the house of the Lord, with the love of sin in his heart, and the practice of sin in his life, unmourned for, unrepented of—this is indeed a provocation of God, and defying of his majesty. Let such an one be warned to take words of humiliation, and to pray for "a new heart, and a right mind;" and desire that he may be cleansed in soul by his Saviour's blood, and henceforth "make his prayers the rule of his life³."

"If any be a worshipper of God and doeth his will, him he heareth." Brethren,

¹ Rev. i. 10.

² John ix. 31.

³ Bp. Jer. Taylor's Holy Living and Dying.

pray, that we may be worshippers of God in the beauty of holiness. Praise is indeed the chief subject of devotion with angels and saints above: for they have no conscience of sin; and no necessities to be supplied. And the warfare of the saints is over. Their voyage is ended. Above, are they evermore crying “holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever¹.”

But, while we remain in this earthly tabernacle, we shall do well to keep up a lively sense of our sin; and a watchfulness over our hearts. “My sin is ever before me².” Thus spake the Psalmist,—and if we grow in grace, penitential sorrow shall soon be exchanged for the songs of the new Jerusalem; and prayers against our besetting sins, shall be forgotten in the Hallelujahs of Heaven.

¹ Rev. v. 13.

² Psalm li. 3.

What a state will that be, where no temple is to be found; for Heaven itself is one vast temple! God will be seen, while we worship him; instead of our dull gaze on the walls or ceiling of these buildings on earth. Happy as we now are, in using such words of calm and hallowed devotion, as our Liturgy affords, what love, what peace, what joy, what unwearied adoration, will fill our bosoms, when we are admitted within the Holy of Holies! There may our great High Priest receive us, never more to go out. There may we “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” There may we be found among the redeemed of the Lamb; and for ever, without fault ¹. before the throne of God.

¹ Rev. xiv. 5.

SERMON II.

MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER.

PSALM v. 7.

“BUT AS FOR ME, I WILL COME INTO THY HOUSE IN
THE MULTITUDE OF THY MERCY : AND IN THY FEAR
WILL I WORSHIP TOWARD THY HOLY TEMPLE.”

OUR Church commences her ministrations, as the Saviour began his mission upon earth, calling upon men, to “repent and believe the Gospel¹.” What can be more impressive than to hear the voice of God in His word, assuring the wicked man that “he shall save his soul alive,” if he will “turn from his wickedness² :” announcing from heaven, that “to the Lord our God,

¹ Mark i. 15.

² Ezek. xviii. 27.

belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him ¹:" commanding us, to "rend our hearts, and not our garments ²:" and promising that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful, and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ³."

The minister then proceeds to apply these Scripture declarations, exhorting his brethren, "dearly beloved" in the Lord, not to dissemble, nor cloke their sins before God; but at a time, when we come into his presence, to return thanks for his mercies, to hear His word, to ask things requisite for the soul, and the body—then, most chiefly, to acknowledge our transgressions, with lowliness, and penitence of heart, which shall surely pass on to obedience. Then do all, who are not infirm, make their bodies, "sensible witnesses of minds unfeignedly humbled ⁴." They bend the knee before Jehovah, and join in the

¹ Daniel ix. 9.

² Joel ii. 13.

³ 1 John i. 9.

⁴ Hooker.

confession of sin, remembering, that Christ Himself, not only kneeled, but cast Himself upon His face to the earth. The Lord is addressed in this prayer, by two of His attributes, which present an awakening contrast. He is Almighty : and, in justice, might have blotted the sinful world from the face of creation. He is “most merciful,” however, yea a “Father ;” and has opened a way for sinners to be reconciled through the blood of his Son. The confession is in *general* terms : for had it been *particular*, all could not have confessed sins, from which some, by grace, had been restrained. But what words can penetrate deeper into the heart, than those which describe us wandering and neglecting the Divine ways ; not only following the corrupt imaginations of our own hearts, but offending against the majesty of God’s holy laws ; and showing, too plainly, that there is no health in the soul ? “The whole heart is sick, the whole head is faint¹.”

¹ Isaiah i. 5.

But, in this abased condition, faith looks up to the great Intercessor, and cries to be spared, to find mercy, and to be restored to the favour of the Lord. And as the gift of pardon, and advancement in grace, are always associated in the mind of the true Christian, a fervent prayer is added that, for Jesus' sake, we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of God's holy name.

When the prophet David had acknowledged, before the rebuking man of God, "I have sinned"—an answer of mercy was heard—"The Lord hath put away thy sin¹." And when the worshippers of God have thus humbled themselves, let them lift up their hearts in faith and hope. Let them not doubt, that God has established in his Church, a "ministry of reconciliation²." Let them that do truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy gospel, receive the gracious assurance, without doubting, of their sins being pardoned. Let them

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 13.

² 2 Cor. v. 18.

listen with gratitude to the justifying declaration, as from God, through his minister—" *He* pardoneth and absolveth : " and let them beseech God to give true repentance from His Holy Spirit, that they may do such things, at this time, as are pleasing to Him ; and that the rest of their lives may be pure, and holy ; so, that at the last, they may come to His eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To him, that is abiding in wilful sin, the sentence of pardon appertaineth not. But the humble and stedfast believer may always, at this part of the service, realize to himself a fresh promise of peace conveyed in Jesus Christ, his Saviour.

It is the privilege of our Church, that the congregation may join aloud in prayer : and wherever the rubrical notice directs, let all make the responses audibly. Accordingly, having been invited by the scriptural sentences, and exhorted to confess our sins ; and having confessed them, and received, through the Church, God's cheer-

ing sentence of forgiveness, we readily welcome the Lord's prayer, and with gladdening words approach "Our Father."—True, we are not worthy to be called His children: but God, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness, and live, He seeth us in our penitence—a great way off; and hath compassion, and His mercy runneth to meet us; and we hear—"ye are my sons and daughters, and I will be a Father unto you ¹."

After devoutly joining in the Lord's prayer, and rejoicing in the comfortable privilege of our adoption in Christ, we entreat the Lord for grace, to serve Him with sincerity; beseeching Him to "open our lips," in order to the showing forth His praise; and to make haste in saving, and helping us: the first of these petitions having been used in the Liturgy of the Apostle James; the latter in the ancient Greek Church.

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 18.

The congregation, after this, standing, in order to represent the passing from a state of penitence to one of nearer access ; and being girded with a lowly spirit, we break forth in adoration of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; mutually stirring up each other's minds, to praise the Lord. And how shall we praise Him in more suitable words, than those which the Holy Ghost hath inspired ? beginning with the psalm, " O come, let us sing unto the Lord," and proceeding to those anthems of Zion, appointed in the daily course. O ! learn to love the Psalms ! they are, by a pious writer, called our Saviour's manual of devotion. And certain am I, that some of these heavenly songs, committed to memory, will afford more refreshment, and support to the soul, than many of those exciting compositions, which the taste of the present age, often prefers to the inspiration of God Himself. The little hymn, " Glory be to the Father," &c. has been in use in the Church from the earliest times. And to

prove to you, how fully aware the enemies of the truth are, that it is a choice cabinet enclosing the gem of the Holy Trinity, the Arians, within 300 years of Christ's death, tried, but in vain, to have it altered thus —“Glory be to the Father, *through* the Son, *in* the Holy Ghost.”

After that the mind has been thus abased in lowly penitence, and carried up to heaven in fervent praise, the congregation called on to hear the word of God. Never let the minister commence, without your offering up a secret request to God, to give you grace to profit by the word. “Take heed how ye hear¹.” Consider the Lord, as speaking in His own oracles ! and you will always hear with advantage. The lessons are so arranged, that the Old Testament is read through once in the year : the New, three times. The subjects are chosen, with reference to the holy seasons ; so that the predictions of the evangelical prophet, Isaiah, are read in

¹ Luke viii. 18.

course before the festival of Christ's birth. And immediately before Lent, the fall and corruption of man, and the judgments of God against the impenitent, recorded in the book of Genesis, are recited, as a solemn warning. Those portions for Saints' days, and other holy seasons, as well as the proper Psalms, show how deeply, and wisely, the edifying of the congregation was fixed in the Reformers' minds.

After the reading of the first lesson, that hymn of praise is offered up, which is said to have been composed by St. Ambrose, on occasion of the conversion of St. Augustine, and first used at his baptism. The former part of the hymn (for the *three* divisions should be marked) is an act of devout praise. The second part begins at that verse—"The Holy Ghost, throughout all the world, doth acknowledge Thee;" and is an act of faith. The *third* portion, in consideration of our being redeemed with Christ's precious blood, properly concludes with prayer for our being numbered

among the saints of God ; for our being governed and lifted up ; for mercy to lighten (or come down) upon us from Him, in whom we have trusted. How sublimely are all the servants of God brought before us in the act of joyful worship ! The whole earth, the angels, the cherub host, the throng of seraphs, the glorified Apostles, the train of Prophets, the army of Martyrs, the Church throughout the universe—are, by faith, seen bowing before the Father, Son, and Spirit. To us, poor ransomed sinners, is that part of the hymn most dear, which reminds us of Christ—now indeed the enthroned King of Glory ; once, taking on him human nature in the womb of the blessed virgin ; enduring, overcoming the sharpness of death, opening the gates of heaven to all believers, and returning again in the clouds to be our Judge.

The next hymn, “ O all ye works of the Lord,” is not often used ; but, it would be especially applicable on those days, when the work of creation is described in the

first chapter of Genesis ; and on the rescue from the flames, of Shadrach, and his faithful brethren, by whom, the Jewish Church, using it in their liturgy, believed it to have been composed.

The second lesson having been read, is followed, either by the hymn of Zacharias, giving thanks for the Gospel of peace, for the mighty, the promised salvation, the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us : or, that Psalm is used, which inculcates joyfulness in devotion ; serving the Lord, not with the heaviness of gloom, but with gladness and thankfulness, and speaking good of His name.

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing, by the word of God¹.” What place, then, so proper for professing our faith, as after listening to, and hiding in our hearts, the treasures of God’s revealed truth ! Each declares aloud his faith. It is not thus

¹ Rom. x. 17.

—*we* believe ; but, as “ without faith it is impossible to please God ¹,” every one doth profess—“ *I* believe in God the Father ;” and so on throughout.

This is called the Apostles’ Creed. It was probably for the most part, either drawn up by the Apostles themselves ; or, by those who learned the truth, as it is in Jesus, at their lips. And it is a reverent and ancient custom, observed by the congregation, to turn to the East when the Creed is repeated, and to worship at the name of Jesus. The primitive Church believed, that the next coming of the Son of Man to perfect His kingdom, would be in that quarter of the heavens. And thus, looking for “ the Sun of Righteousness arising with healing on his wings ²,” mingled their faith and devotion. Nor are we without a divine command, spiritual indeed in design, but not without reference to external adoration, that “ at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow ³.”

¹ Heb. xi. 6. ² Mal. iv. 2. ³ Phil. ii. 10.

The Creed, commonly called that of St. Athanasius, is occasionally substituted for the Apostles' Creed. But it is so called, rather from the upholding of the Divine truth, for which this good Bishop of Alexandria suffered so much, than from his being the author. Hilary a Bishop of France, is more correctly supposed to have drawn it up: not intending the Creed as an explanation, but a formal assertion of those great doctrines which belong to the salvation of man. As to what are called the damnatory clauses being objected to, we may as well presume to find fault with our Saviour; who pronounces in the plainest, and most emphatic manner—"He that believeth not, shall be damned ¹."

The attitude of supplication is now resumed, the minister and the congregation having reciprocally implored the grace of the Lord to be with each other in spirit. Brethren, let not these be words of form.

¹ Mark xvi. 16.

Let your prayers be fervent for us, that we may bear your souls on our bosom before the great High Priest ; that we may not merely read the prayers, but so pray with you, and for you, that the fire of devotion may ever be effectually kindled to the glory of the Lord, in the sanctuary of our God.

We return to the throne of grace with the Lord's Prayer in our lips, as most proper for resuming our worship : and as being a compendium of those desires, which we are about to present, more minutely, to the hands of our great Advocate. And, perhaps, the little verses, alternately uttered, are intended, in the same spirit, as guides to the general subjects of intercession for ourselves and others. In these is mercy sought for all, and salvation for the Lord's people ; and blessing on the rulers ordained of God, over the nation ; grace on the ministers of the Church ; peace in our days ; a clean heart desired, and the all-consecrating presence of the Spirit of God.

Next follow the Collects : a term implying the sense of a certain portion of God's word, *collected* into a short prayer. Often in these most remarkable compositions, does the title, by which God is addressed, beautifully harmonize with the substance of condensed piety in the prayer. They are, with very few exceptions, taken from a liturgy in use about 560 years after the death of Christ. The one now before us, is for peace ; and God is addressed, as the Author of peace and lover of concord, " Whom truly to know, is everlasting life." His service, instead of being considered a harsh bondage, is pronounced " perfect freedom." " I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou hast set me at liberty," is ever the language of true piety. —Nor is the next Collect, for Grace, less striking. We approach God as a " Heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting ;" acknowledging his protection to the present moment ; desiring to be kept from sin within our souls, and from danger to the

body ; and entreating, that God would order our doings by His governance, that we may do what is righteous in His sight. This, and every prayer which is not directly offered to the Son, is placed in His hands to be purged from defilement. Yea, every prayer is tendered through Jesus Christ contemplated as Saviour, Advocate, Mediator, or Intercessor—all reminding us, that “no man cometh unto the Father but by Him¹.”

It may be needful here to remark, that the Morning Service was used distinct from the Litany till the time of the Restoration. So it now is in our Cathedrals. But in Parish Churches, when the Litany is not appointed to be used, then the minister proceeds to that fine prayer for our King, taken from the ancient Liturgy of Gregory. Christians, sensible of the difficulty of their rulers' situation, should commend them to God, the King of kings,

¹ John xiv. 16.

and Lord of lords ; praying for them and all the Royal family, that they may be replenished with grace, and finally brought to the everlasting kingdom. Nor let your prayers be wanting for all Bishops, and Curates of souls—that the healthful Spirit of grace, and the dew of His blessing, may descend on them, and on all committed to their charge.

In order to supply the absence of the Litany, Bishop Sanderson compiled that amazing digest of intercession, “ O God the Creator and Preserver,” &c. and I pray you, mark, how devoutly remembered are all sorts and conditions of men. For the heathen (ignorant of the Lord that bought them) we desire, that Christ’s “ way may be known upon earth ; His saving health among all nations ¹.” Mark how charitably the prayer ascends in behalf of the Church, for a spirit of unity, peace, and righteousness, to descend on all who pro-

¹ Psalm lxvii. 2.

fess and call themselves Christians : and how the wants of all, in mind, body, and estate, are presented before God ! The selfishness of our nature would represent intercession, a dull duty : but never is the heart in a more truly Christian frame, than when, in humble imitation of our great High Priest, we are affectionately engaged in prayer for the children of men.

That the Council of Parliament may be directed, that seasons of storm, and war, and sickness, may be averted, does our Church next send forth her voice. And, drawing to a conclusion, she blesses the Father of all mercies, for creating and preserving goodness ; for redeeming, and sanctifying grace—beseeching, that a due sense of the mercy of God may be granted us, and that by our lives, as well as with our lips, we may show forth God's praise in Christ Jesus. A beautiful prayer by St. Chrysostom, the holy Bishop of Constantinople addressed to our Saviour, as God, sums up our requests, in the hope of his

fulfilling the promise of being present “where two or three are gathered together in his name ¹ :” and the grace of the Saviour, the love of the Father, and the Sanctifier’s fellowship, being invoked, we may hope for that peace which passeth all understanding.

I must now briefly mention the Evening Service; which differs little from the morning, save in the selection of the hymns, and the two Collects. But can we omit to notice a tranquil spirit ² which seems to breathe through these. In the morning, zeal and faithfulness and vigour seem implied, in those desires for strength against the assaults of our enemies, in fighting the good fight of faith. But when the battle of the day is fought, and the shades of evening are drawn around us,

¹ Matt. xviii. 20.

² Vide Bishop Jebb’s Sermons on the Liturgy.

how softly does the virgin's gentle hymn fall on the ear, rejoicing in God her Saviour, for regarding the lowliness of His handmaiden, and exalting the humble and meek ! How soothing to the wearied heart, are the breathings of aged Simeon, that he may depart in peace—his eyes having seen the salvation of the Lord. And, in a kindred tone, do we pray the Giver of all holy desires, good counsels, and just works, to bestow *that* peace, which the world cannot give ; and to grant, that we may pass our time in rest and quietness ; and that the Lord would lighten the darkness of our hearts, and preserve us from all perils and dangers of the night.

We pass on to the last subject of this evening—the Litany. But, what a subject for religious study ! The word, Litany, means earnest supplication. The mixed character of the prayer, which regards the Priest interceding, and the people responding, is derived from the usage of the

first Christians. The substance of this service is taken from that of Gregory Bishop of Rome, (A. D. 590) who formed the Litany for that Church, from a careful collation of all such devotions previously in use.

The Litany was wont to be said in *processions*—of the priest and people ; but was ordered, as celebrated by us, at the time of our Reformation. It was appointed for use on Sunday ; and on every Wednesday and Friday, these two latter days marking the betrayal, and crucifixion of Christ ; but little observed in our days by the congregation. I particularly beg your attention to the divisions of the Litany.

I. The *Invocation* : wherein we address separately, and then jointly, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—calling to mind, the special work of each Divine Person in our salvation ; and desiring mercy for ourselves as miserable sinners.

The second portion is called the *Deprecation*, or prayer against evil. How humble,

and earnest, is that tone of piety, which beseeches Christ, as God, not to remember our offences, nor those of our forefathers; but, to spare us, and be not angry, for ever, with those whom He has redeemed with His most precious blood.

Sin, is the first thing prayed against, as the greatest of evils; leading, assuredly, if not repented, to God's wrath, and everlasting damnation. How is sin traced, in all the deep association of worship, through blindness of heart, the inward wickedness of a corrupt disposition, the hidden passions of pride, vain-glory, envy, and uncharitableness.

Next, the outward train of open vices, lying in wait to ensnare—the grosser desires of animal appetite, and every deceit of the world, and the flesh, and the tempter. Nor till these our greatest dangers have been warded off by the shield of humble supplication, do we suffer the mind, to think of external peril from storm, disease, and suddenness of death. Then does the

mind range from private dangers, to public insecurity arising from sedition and rebellion ; to the injury of the Church from false doctrine, heresy of faith, and separation from her communion or schism.

I beseech you, says St. Paul, “by the mercies of God ; and by the meekness of Christ.” Thus the Church addressing her Saviour, reminds Him, of all his sorrows in humiliating succession : His assuming our low nature, His subjection to the law in circumcision, His baptism by the hand of His forerunner, His days of fasting and temptation. Now, in a deeply mysterious prostration of soul, we set before the glorified Saviour, His agony in the garden ; His atoning sacrifice on the cross ; His tremendous death, and burial in the sealed sepulchre ; then, rising on the wing of joy, we celebrate His glorious resurrection from the dead, His ascension to heaven, and mission of the Holy Spirit ; and in virtue of all these tokens of love, we intreat, from the heart, our good Lord to deliver us.

But when? in all time of our trouble; in ease and prosperity as full of danger; in the moment of quitting this world for another state; and in that hour, when sentence of bliss or woe unutterable, is to be for ever passed. This passage, considered among human compositions, is, perhaps, the sublimest combination of solemn and affecting thoughts ever presented to the mind; exciting all our hopes and fears, connected with the varied trials of life, and carrying the devout imagination through the ordeal of the grave, to the tribunal of man's final destiny.

The third portion of the Litany is *intercessory*. The sovereign of the land, and all invested with rank and authority from him; the pastors of the Church, in their Apostolic orders, the dispensers of justice, the people of God in general, peace foreign and domestic—all this is placed before the notice of our good Lord, by us, beseeching Him to hear us.

And next, observe, an interesting tran-

sition from temporal to spiritual matters. A heart, influenced by the love and fear of God, and inclined to live diligently according to the commandment—thus is classed, perhaps, one description of Christians. But, another, seeking to bring forth sixty, yea an hundred fold, is not satisfied without “increase of grace;” *hearing the word meekly ; receiving it with pure affection ;* and bringing forth the fruits of the *Spirit*. Other professing disciples have gone astray and been deceived. Some are weak, though sincere. Others have fallen. And all these are respectively prayed for—that they may be brought back, strengthened, comforted, helped, as each has need ; and that Satan may finally be triumphed over.

And now, the vicissitudes of life present themselves, and the soul of the worshipper is carried out into yearnings for the sorrowful and needy ; the traveller by land or by water ; the mother, whose hour is come ; the sick man or woman ; the young child ; the prisoner ; the captive abroad ; the or-

phan; the widow; the desolate; the oppressed—and lest a soul should be forgotten—in the fulness of a love, resembling the love of God, the Church exclaims, “Have mercy upon all men.” Yea, as if *publicly* to declare, that in our hearts we bear enmity against none, we pray God to forgive those who have ever done us wrong; and entreat Him to bestow on His people, all things needful for their earthly support. And the whole is summed up in prayer, for the gift of repentance; a full pardon for all that has been amiss in us; and grace to amend our lives, in accordance with God’s holy word.

Then, is the Lamb of God, (who taketh away sin, not partially, but the sin of the whole world,) besought for His mercy: and as the Litany began, so does it conclude, with an acknowledgment of the blessed Trinity; the Father, Christ, and the Spirit, being invoked to have mercy upon us.

IV. The portion from this to the end, is occupied by prayer for the Church in

her troubles. And when has the Church been free from persecution of some kind? from the days, when these supplications were prepared against the Gothic invaders, to the present hour,—when cold indifference, secret opposition, pretended attachment, and open defiance, assail her on every side. This division is consecrated by the use of Christ's prayer, which in our minds we should always so apply, as to bear upon the different parts of the service, with which it is connected. We entreat "Our Father," not to deal with us as our sins have deserved, but (as a God, who despiseth not the sorrow and sighing of the contrite heart) to assist us in our prayers under every trial, and to bring to nought the evils of all our spiritual enemies; and to grant, that in the bosom of His ever defended Church, we may serve Him with thankfulness in Christ.

Like the Psalmist of old, and in his words, we call upon God to arise, as in the ancient days, for our rescue. We ascribe

glory on high, in remembrance of all His mighty interposition for His Church. We supplicate Him to be gracious, and full of pity and favour towards the sorrows of our hearts. We renew the cry for mercy. We avow our trust in God only ; and we conclude with a strong expression of our sense of infirmity, confessing that we are not worthy to escape the judgments due to our sins ; but, seeking strength where alone strength can be obtained, for the trials that may yet lie unseen before us ; and praying that we may, under all our discouragements, preserve a pure life dedicated to the glory and honour of God, in Jesus Christ our only Mediator and Advocate.

Is this the Liturgy, that some in the present day are so anxious to see revised, and *amended* ? Is this the Liturgy, that many complain of, as being too long ? Rather, instead of presuming to pass our hasty censures on so ancient and hallowed

a form of devotion, let us humbly try ourselves by its divine principles. Dreadful indeed is the thought of any persons taking such words of humiliation and praise, supplication, and intercession, into the lips, while the "heart is not right in the sight of God¹." If there be any who have this day trespassed on God's mercy thus far, let a speedy repentance bring them in faith to the foot of the cross; and henceforth let their prayer be their rule of life.

But have those of us who profess to be seeking salvation, applied the words with sincerity to our souls. Did we feel conviction of sin, when we prayed for mercy, as "miserable offenders?" Did we take comfort in the assurance of remitted sin? Have we brought home to the heart, the atonement of Christ, when we cried to him as "the Lamb of God?" Is the Holy Spirit welcomed by us, after praying for increase of grace? Are we resolved on devout study of the Scriptures, after the petition

¹ Acts viii. 21.

has been presented to God, that we may receive the word with pure affection? Can enmity rankle in the bosom of one, who has besought pardon for our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers? Does heaven seem a livelier object of hope to those, who have desired that “at the last, we may come to God’s eternal joy?”

What repentance should be found in us, after calling upon God for new and contrite hearts! How should faith become brighter, and warmer, in those who have bowed before the Father as Almighty, everlasting, the Author of peace, whose nature and property is, ever to have mercy and to forgive! And how should faith kindle towards the Son, whom we have invoked by His agony, His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension! Towards the Spirit, should the heart no less be lifted up, to whom, proceeding from the Father and the Son, we have offered prayer for His unfailing compassion, as miserable sinners! How should our charity diffuse itself throughout the

whole body of professing disciples in the Church!

Thus let us ever pour out our hearts before Him, for God is our hope. Wonderful art Thou, O God, in Thy holy places, even the God of Israel. Thou wilt give strength and power unto Thy people. Blessed be God ¹!

¹ Psalm lxviii. 35.

SERMON III.

COMMUNION OFFICE.

1 JOHN i. 8, 9.

“ IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US. IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL, AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.”

IT has already been stated, that the service for the Lord's Supper, was the first which was prepared in English, and used by our Church, at the Reformation. Compared with the Roman missal it differs much from that Formulary. It is, indeed, grounded upon the ancient devotional of Sarum; which, being derived from some of the

earliest Liturgies, came into use in the reign of William the Conqueror.

Every one should carefully read the Rubrics—those occasional directions printed in a smaller type: which, being once in *red* letters, gave the name of Rubric. In that before the Communion Service, you will notice the painful, but imperative, duty devolving on the Minister, of refusing to receive any person at this Sacrament, whose life contradicts his Christian profession. You will observe also, that the Communicants are required, on some previous day, to give notice to the Minister, of their intention to be present at this Sacrament. This may not be necessary, where the Communion is frequent, and the attendance regular. But thus far, it is desirable that the rule should be observed—that no one should ever offer himself at the Lord's table, *for the first time*, without the previous sanction of the Minister. If there exist not this confidential communion of mind, between the ministering servants of

God, and the members of Christ's Church, we may be readers and preachers; but are hardly to be accounted *Pastors*, under the great Shepherd of souls.

The name of Altar was applied to the Communion Table during the first three centuries by Christian writers; and it was so designated in the first service book of King Edward the Sixth. But the term itself is immaterial, since this Sacrament is considered by the Church as a Spiritual Sacrifice of Commemoration,—conveying to the soul of the believer, the highest benefits of Divine Grace.

The Communion Service consists of three parts:—

1. That portion shall be noticed, which is used as separated from the rest; since the custom ceased of celebrating the Lord's Supper on every Sunday, and other Festivals of the Church. In the Cathedrals, however, (the mother churches of the diocese,) this part of the Communion office is still rarely severed from the rest of the service.

Let us remember that the Apostles and first Christians received the Communion *daily*; that, in the primitive Church, the Lord's Supper was the *chief object* of a congregation assembling; and that it was considered essential to the completeness of divine service. Must we not feel that we are either insincere in professing our belief of great advantages flowing from a participation thereof, or should we not endeavour to restore, under the sanction of authority, the observance of a more frequent, *if not*, weekly Communion?

The service in the primitive Church, as in ours, began with the Lord's Prayer: and St. Jerome, not quite 400 years after Christ, in reference to this usage, applies the words "Give us this day our daily bread," to the holy sustenance for the soul, provided in the Spiritual Sacrifice. A prayer follows, valuable at all times, but especially when preparing to receive "Christ and his life¹" in our hearts, by faith. A prayer,

¹ Hooker.

that our inmost thoughts may be cleansed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ; to the end that we may perfectly love God, and worthily magnify his holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Never, perhaps, was there a more beautiful illustration of the doctrine—"the law was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ ¹," than the position of the ten Commandments, in the Communion service. The Law continues to be to us, though not a covenant of works, yet a rule of life, a standard of holiness ; when taken in the length and breadth, enforced and exemplified by our Saviour. And the summary of God's will in the Ten Commandments is now read aloud, in order that all, examining themselves by the spiritual meaning of each, may seek mercy for past transgressions, and obtain grace, inclining our minds—to keep the will of God, and to desire continually that all his Laws may be written in our hearts.

We shall answer the intention of the

¹ Gal. iii. 24.

Church best, if we turn the reading of these Commandments spoken from Heaven by God, into heads of self examination ; by viewing them in that spiritual light, which He reflected on them, who “came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil¹.”

1. “Thou shalt have none other Gods but me.” Thus did God begin to speak these words. From the voice of God, himself, we learn, that he “knoweth of none other God than himself².” Now unless we understand something of the very corrupt state of the human heart, we are ready to imagine, that if we had even broken all the other nine commandments, by the most flagrant disobedience, at least, we are not guilty under this head. Beware ! lest thy boasting be built on a wrong foundation.

You have never *said*, like the fool, “there is no God³ :” but have you never had any doubts ? You have never indulged those vain dreams of “philosophy, falsely so

¹ Matt. v. 17.

² Is. lvi. 8.

³ Ps. xiv. 1.

called," which represent all things as having existed from eternity, as they are: but have you never listened to beguiling theories of materialism? have you never acted, as if, practically, there were no moral Governor to frown on your evil doings?

Men, who profess to believe in God, deny Him in their works, when they are guilty of actions, *only before Him*, from the commission of which, the quick eye of a child would affright them. We practically deny God, when we attribute our talents, our success, situation in life, safety, or knowledge to ourselves, instead of God. How often do we hear from the lips of those, who ought to have learned better lessons in the school of Christ—of good luck, of such a person being fortunate, of mere chance! Too frequently is there no reference, open or secret, to the government of the world by God. It is thought either beyond his attention, or beneath his dignity, to give heed to our concerns: whereas his blessed Son hath declared, that "not a

sparrow can fall to the ground without Him ; and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered ¹.”

The world claims, on too many occasions, a deference to its arbitrary decrees, which is not so readily conceded to the Lord of all. For have we not marked a conflict within ourselves or others? Present duty is on one side ; pleasure or gain on the other : there is a struggle for the mastery. Our salvation is implicated : and when Faith should come forward and give the victory, some deceitful plea is taken up for being false to our master’s interests ; we turn from him that loved us to the death, and league with a world, hastening to ruin.

What will be thought and said of me, if I do not join in such an amusement (which the spirit of the Gospel condemns, as ill suiting the self-denying life of a Christian). What remarks will be made, if our houses, and dress, and furniture are not of a superior quality ! Our means, perhaps, are not equal

¹ Luke xii. 6.

to a better appearance; but to be singular, to be ridiculed, or despised, is painful beyond the endurance of flesh and blood. Bear me witness, that these and similar earthly motives rule the mind, when the only question for one, who bears the vows of Jesus on the soul, should be, How shall I be pleasing God? And thus do we move, or remain still, think, act, and speak at the signal of worms, like ourselves. We live forgetful that we are bound, at the risk of damnation, to “glorify God in our bodies and our spirits, which are His ¹,” we go on heedless of the Divine Command—“Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ ².” Now if to be God—imply the right of entire dominion over the spirits of His creatures, and if we have paid submission to the world, which we have refused to render unto the Lord Jehovah, then we have, *in fact*, acknowledged a god of this world for our god. It does not signify what we may profess in

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 20.. ² Col. iii. 17.

words; “God looketh at the heart¹:” and whensoever, from our youth up even until now, we have loved or feared, trusted or rejoiced in anything more than in God, we have avowed—there is one, which has more weight with me than Jehovah: there is another god, whose kingdom is powerful within me; and that god has been my god.

Let us pray, that the Holy Spirit may convict each one of us; and that discerning, what our particular offences may have been, we may, not in mere form, but in sincerity of soul, petition, “Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this Law.”

2. The first commandment declares the existence of one God: the second requires us to worship God, by faith, in spirit and in truth. Grievous it is to reflect, that according to the prophecy, Christians should be found bowing down before images of

¹ 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

wood and stone. And although by a refinement of explanation, men may affirm, that bowing down with adoration, is not paying religious worship to the image—sufficient will it be for us, sitting in simplicity at the feet of Jesus, to think it a sin, to form any supposed likeness of the Lord, in order that we may bend the body before the workmanship of man.

But are we clear from other modes of breaking this commandment? Many are the unscriptural methods of making peace between God and the soul. We may be resting so much on our repentance, as to forget the foundation of atonement in Christ. Or, again, we may be expecting forgiveness, without deep humiliation for sin; and without bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit. We may, by searching, recall most unworthy notions of God. Have we never, in imagination, profanely blamed him as partial, in withholding from *us*, what He hath given to others? Have we never, in our presumption, thought it hard, that *we* should be in sickness or trouble,

when the current of another's life seemed running smoothly? Have we never dared to judge Him, as severe, in punishing our sins, and letting not His anger cease from us?

Hath not God appeared to our rebellious spirits, a breaker of His promises, in not answering prayer according to our desires? and have we not, sometimes, presumed to doubt His care and direction in the events of our life, when our course has not been exactly ordered as we would have desired. Has He not by some, been pictured as so stern a God, that the poor penitent has been scared into a state of distraction? or, by others, as so easy and indulgent, that sin, whether mourned or not, shall be washed away, as a matter of course, by the blood of Christ. Some are driven from the enjoyment of piety, by the fear of being thought over-righteous: as if we could love *Him* too much, "that spared not His own Son¹" to die for us! Others do not worship Him with that godly reverence, due from the ran-

¹ Rom. viii. 32.

somed sinner to the God of all mercy. Too many, in addressing themselves to God, do not kneel: but use the careless tone, and the familiar posture of the body, employed when conversing on subjects of comparative indifference.

When we consider that the reason for idolatry being forbidden is, that our affections towards the God of heaven may not be debased by any earthly associations tending to his dishonour, how can any one of us escape the charge of having, in some way, provoked our God, jealous of his glory? And with what feelings of shame, ought we to turn unto Him, and entreat His forgiveness, before whom angels veil their eyes!

3. The third commandment forbids our taking the name of God in vain. How are we to reconcile this received law of Heaven, with the awful practice of cursing and swearing heard around us! The habit is so common, that, in foreign countries, we are “a byword among the people.”

Strange, that even they who have received the highest education, and walk among the more refined circles of society, should countenance so depraved a custom. Conversation is, alas ! perverted and defiled by the frequent and profane repeating of God's name, oftentimes in connection with endless torment. In more humble life, men, yea and women too, are to be heard, uttering the most awful imprecations on themselves if what they assert is not true ; and calling down curses—on occasions the most trivial. Is it not painful to reflect, that good manners shall, on some occasions, produce a check, where Religion fails in exerting its holy influence ?

But while we judge others, judge we ourselves. We acknowledge, that to use the name of God with all reverence of the outward man, and adoration of soul, is one of the main guards of religion. And, that this command comprehensively includes, under the use of the name of God, all that belongs to His holy word and sacraments,

and ordinances, and ministers. How then can we answer it before God, for joining in the prayers with our lips, while the heart is far from Him? Which of us, this very day, has not again and again, in our prayers, called upon God, with cries for pardon, or grace; professing sorrow for sin, or deep gratitude for mercies, while the temple of the heart was crowded with the things of this world? Nothing is more humiliating to a Christian mind, than, on recovering from these indevout slumbers, to reflect on what has been passing within. How agonizing to a sensitive conscience, to find the sounds, God, Christ, the Spirit, the mighty subjects of salvation, and eternal fire, not yet ceasing on the ear, while no responsive feeling of devotion has been awakened within us! How often, even with earnestness of voice and manner, have we found ourselves uttering prayers for grace, while we were careless whether they were heard or not! Sins confessed in word, but no penitence felt! Thanksgiving rendered,

but no gratitude kindled ! Which amongst us can be so ignorant of himself, as not to acknowledge these things to be true ? Can we expect that God will vouchsafe an answer to prayers, which have been offered with indifference ? Would we in this spirit ask a favour from an earthly monarch ?

Beware of justifying ourselves, when “in thy sight no man living can be justified¹.” Rather, cast our burden of guilt at the foot of the cross, and implore with the humbled publican in the parable, “God ! be merciful to me a sinner².”

4. The fourth Commandment begins in a remarkable manner—*Remember*, that thou keep holy the sabbath day :” as if the precept had been from the beginning ; and as if man were likely to forget : and the reason for its observance is given, in God’s ceasing from the works of creation on that day. The command was newly enforced, when Israel was rescued from the captivity of

¹ Ps. cxliii. 2.

² Luke xviii. 13.

Egypt. And the "Lord of the sabbath," still keeping up the portion of time in each week, a seventh, ordained the *first* day in the stead of the last, to be observed by His followers, on holier ground—namely His rising from the dead, and redeeming man from the captivity of Satan.

But, "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath ¹," cries one; and imagines, by this text misapplied, to screen himself from the charge of desecrating the sacred festival. He hopes, by the perverted word of God, to justify his not entering God's sanctuary at all, on the sabbath. Or he is satisfied with coming only *once* to Church; as if God had said, "Remember that thou keep holy *half of the sabbath day*." While some, who have been zealous, all the week, in the service of the world, think that they have purchased a right to neglect God, because they have served themselves: and lo! the day is spent

¹ Mark ii. 27.

in idleness, by these ; by some, in a continuation of their trade or employment ; by others, in meeting for unprofitable, and often polluting amusements. We would not bear hard on those who are encumbered with families ; or others, worn down by harassing occupation during the week. But I do avow my belief before God, that by a proper arrangement of time, the soul can be edified while yet the body is refreshed : the soul may be trained for heaven, on Christ's own day, without infringing on (nay rather with hallowing of) such recreation to the body, as would be a real blessing to body and soul. But, what can excuse the habit, on the Lord's day, of buying and selling, or indulging in such excursions, as to prevent the possibility of worshipping God ? Is it not a melancholy sight, to cast one's eyes around, and behold the pews in many cases empty, and see that there is still room, while thousands around are dishonouring the day of holy rest ? Many, it is to be feared, fill

up the length of the sabbath, tiresome to them, with unmeaning visits. Some have spent the Saturday evening (which the primitive Christians looked on, almost, as part of the Lord's day) either at some public exhibition, or in so improper a manner, otherwise, that their late hour of rising, prevents their appearance at the morning service ! In so doing, they hurt not themselves alone. Children and servants fail not to mark the inconsistency herein ; and learn to think, that religion is a solemn profession, that may be taken up, or laid down, at our convenience.

Leave others now, and let us turn more closely to inspect ourselves. We, at least, by our appearance on this " holy ground," are avowing an outward reverence for the Lord's day.

But, when we come within the sacred walls, do we always recollect, that the Lord Jesus is actually present in an especial manner, " where two or three are gathered

together in His name¹?" Have we prepared ourselves, by meditating—on our failings during the week, and on the mercies received from God, so as to apply the general expressions of the service to ourselves? Have we let the week pass away, without any serious self-examination? Have we striven to lay by, from the word of God, some motives in store against the trials of the ensuing week? Have any of us come before God, merely in order to keep up a respectable appearance? or, is it our hearty endeavour to be "in the spirit," with St. John, on this day, which should be to us, a type of heaven? Do we avoid reading light books? Do we resolutely decline opening the journals of secular news? Do we try, without assuming an artificial stiffness, to keep our minds free from worldly matters, and infuse into conversation, an edifying and refreshing tone?

¹ Matt. xviii. 20.

Is the *care of the soul*, the chief concern with us, both in and out of Church?

Such, are some of the proofs, not external only, which God requires of us, as faithful servants, taken into His household. That we should acknowledge Him, and let Him have supreme rule over our hearts, as the only God—that we reject all gross and unworthy conceptions of His Divine nature, and render Him spiritual service—that we should honour His name; and with it, all that belongeth unto God—and that we should hallow His own day, by a devout observance of its privileged duties, both in our homes, and in the courts of the Lord's house.

Brethren! is it for His good, or for our own, that we are thus commanded? What glory can the Most High derive from wretched services, such as we can offer? Is it not painful—to the man most advanced in godliness, to consider how wanting are

all his duties? Our very repentance needs repenting of. Our prayers for mercy, require a new exercise of mercy, before they can reach the throne of heaven. These are probably the best offerings which we have to present; and if these want forgiveness, what shall become of our presumptuous sins? How unworthy, in His sight, must appear all our actions done amid the confusion of a corrupt world! How shall any one of us stand before the Judge!

If all be sinners, who then shall escape? He shall obtain acceptance, that has mourned for his sins, before the Lord Jesus Christ; he “shall be comforted¹.” Whosoever hath sorrowed for sin, with godly sorrow, and fled for refuge, by faith, to the cross of his Saviour, his sins “shall not be mentioned unto him².” The Spirit, by whose grace he has become a true believer, will not only calm his conscience in Christ, but cleanse him from all unright-

¹ Matt. v. 2.

² Ezek. xviii. 22.

teousness; will inspire him with hunger and thirst after holiness; and, unless obstinately resisted, will “stablish, strengthen, settle” him ¹.

Be assured that a chief cause of our making so slow a progress in grace, is, that we have not commonly a sufficiently deep view of the corruptness of our hearts by nature. Hence, are some offended at the term *sinner* applied to their state. Hence, we do not value the atonement of our Lord on the cross, as devoutly as we ought; and are not sufficiently in earnest about seeking the sanctifying energy of the holy Comforter. When such a God, who gave His Son for our ransom, and His Spirit for our guide and purifier, calls on us to believe in Him, and to fear Him, and to love Him, shall we be slow to do this, in His appointed way? When He requires us to worship Him, to give Him thanks, to put our whole trust in Him, to honour His name and word, and to serve Him truly

¹ 1 Pet. v. 10.

all the days of our life—shall we talk of morality being sufficient? of our being able to procure happiness by our own deserts? of our not having done *any harm*? of our not being afraid to give in our account? Shall we open our mouth in such proud and blasphemous defiance of the only Saviour; when Scripture declares, that “every mouth shall be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God¹?”

O! be merciful to yourselves, as God willeth to be merciful unto you. Trust, with all your heart, in His Son, to take away your guilt; and in His Spirit, to make you partakers of a Divine nature. Strive to “be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect².” And, *when* you have done all that was commanded you—at the last, with the eye of faith fixed on the ascended Jesus, be ready to say, “I am an unprofitable servant³.” “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit⁴.”

¹ Rom. iii. 19.

² Matt. v. 48.

³ Luke xvii. 10.

⁴ Acts vii. 59.

SERMON IV.

COMMUNION OFFICE.

1 JOHN i. 8, 9.

“IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES, AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US. IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.”

It has often been a mistake hurtful to the advance of the Gospel, and to the souls of men, to imagine that God may be served by halves. Some, who have been regular in their worship of the Lord, have thought themselves at liberty to relax in their duty to their fellow creatures. On the other

hand, the moral man conceives that he may dispense with the observances of religion, on the score of his being honest, friendly, and active. Thus, on the one side, a mistaken devotion is used as a cloak for uncharitableness or dishonesty : while on the other, integrity or benevolence, is made an excuse for the absence of piety. As if, the want of one grace could be atoned for, by the exercise of another ! As if, our best efforts did not require forgiveness ! As if, irreligion could claim acceptance, because unattended by fraud ; or injury and neglect towards others, expect remission, because found in a *professing* worshipper of God. We must not suffer ourselves to be thus deceived by the great enemy of souls. We must “ watch and pray ” against such ruinous deceits of Satan.

Having set before you the spiritual interpretation of the first four Commandments, containing our duty towards God, I pray the Lord to bless us, in considering the remaining six, as a means of discover-

ing the state of our hearts towards our neighbour.

The laws of God comprise in a few words, those principles which enforce and regulate a regard for the life, the rights, the property, the character, of our fellow creatures: and the spirit of these laws consists in our doing to others, as we would have them do unto us.

5. The fifth Commandment, which requires honour, paid to our parents, enjoins due respect, also, to our rulers in Church and State; the King, and all that bear authority under him, as well as spiritual Pastors, and Masters; who may with propriety be called our civil and ecclesiastical parents.

Now, on hearing this read from the Altar, every son, and daughter, who has not openly set a parent's authority at defiance, is at first inclined to maintain, 'I am not aware of dishonouring my father or mother.' But "the heart is deceitful above all things, and

desperately wicked : who can know it ¹ ?” Search and ascertain, whether we have, on every day of our lives, striven to reward a tender mother’s watchfulness over the cradle, and her first lessons of infant piety ? Have none of us made a father’s heart ache, by misapplying the advantages of education or trade ? Perhaps some do rejoice in relieving a parent’s necessities under the pressure of old age or infirmity. But can *young* persons, especially, be altogether free from the charge of a sullen look, a murmuring answer, of unwilling obedience, if not of actual rebellion ? What ! have we no idleness to mourn for in youth, while our anxious parents were looking, but looking in vain, for honour, for success, for improvement ? Have no attachments been formed, contrary to a parent’s wishes ? See ! if dissipation has never drained their purse, little able, perhaps, in the decline of life to bear their means thus wasted ? Has advice been

¹ Jer. xvii. 9.

dutifully asked, and dutifully followed? Perhaps, we may not have cast a mantle over their infirmities, as we ought: but brothers and sisters may have unscrupulously discussed, *among themselves*, if not before others, the imperfections of temper in their parents, or in those who have acted the part of parents; or, perhaps, they have ridiculed that want of knowledge, manner, and accomplishment in parents, the which to afford us, ungrateful children, they have practised self-denial in every way which they could devise. “If thou, Lord, should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O! Lord, who may abide it¹.”

6. “Thou shalt do no murder.” This word of God is the safe-guard of life—a very short, a most uncertain term of days; a period of discipline granted us, for securing our interest in the cross of Christ, and for becoming sanctified by the grace of the Spirit, in order to our enjoying heavenly

¹ Ps. cxxx. 3. old Translation.

happiness. Can we look into a record of passing events, even in this land, blessed for so many centuries with the light of the Gospel, without reading an account of some horrid murder committed?

How few have the courage to refuse the challenge of the duellist—who passes, with the sanction of the world, under the title of the man of honour! How few will dare to take up this question, on the principles of that Gospel, by the vows of which they profess to be bound! Now, in the Sermon on the Mount, we find the Lord laying the command on the government of the *heart*. As a little acorn will, in time, become a mighty oak, so a little angry feeling, or hasty word, is the first spark in the train of murder. “Whosoever is angry with his neighbour without a cause, is in danger under this law¹.” Whosoever provokes another, or gives way to malice, in himself; whosoever is cross, passionate, or unforgiving; whosoever is slow in seeking

¹ Matt. v. 22.

reconciliation ; or backward to return good for evil ; to join hand to hand in peace, where the parties have been in enmity, may well tremble, lest he be not truly a child of that God, who “maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good ; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust¹. He may fear, lest he be not acknowledged by that Saviour, whose dying words on the cross, for His murderers, were, “ Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do².”

7. “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Think not that this marks out him alone, who has dared invade his neighbour’s privacy and purity ; deprive his babes of a once chaste mother ; and heinously put asunder, what God hath joined together. Think not, that he alone is charged herein with guilt from heaven, who lives false to the marriage vow made by him at the altar. Our Saviour pronounces thus, “ he

¹ Matt. v. 45.

² Luke xxiii. 34.

that looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already *in his heart*¹." The impurity of thought, of the tongue, of the eye, is no less forbidden, than the open act of sin. Am I speaking truth or not, when I affirm, that "a young man," seeking "wherewithal he shall cleanse his way," and preserve an unpoluted mind and body, is not honoured as he should be, in a community professedly Christian? Where, let me ask, in Scripture, is the licence given to the profligate, that he may drink the cup of uncleanness, because the Lord hath sent him forth upon earth, a son, not a daughter of Adam? Would to God, that the young would always have printed in their heart, that Christ has pronounced, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God²;" that a chaste spirit is the child of religion, the nurse of health and virtue, the robe of the redeemed, the foretaste of angelic bliss.

¹ Matt. v. 28.

² Matt. v. 8.

And O ! that those words of the inspired Apostle may tingle in the ears of those, who have hitherto set at nought, the warning of God, "Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once named amongst you, as becometh saints : of the which I tell you now, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God ¹." Beware ! my dear young friends, if you care for your souls, (that cost the blood of the Son of God,) of places, books, persons, which can prove, in any way, defiling to the heart. Go not to that scene or company, on which you cannot first ask the blessing of God. And if you meet with reproach, for separating yourselves from corrupt doings and evil society, remember, that He, who is to be your Judge, hath declared, "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake ; your reward is great in Heaven ²."

¹ Eph. v. 3. Gal. v. 21.

² Luke vi. 22, 23.

8. "Thou shalt not steal."—Thus God proclaiming from His glorious throne, protects the property, which, in His providence, He bestows respectively on His creatures ; requiring us to be true and just in all our dealings. To this, what is the appeal of conscience ? If thou hast never openly robbed, or secretly kept back that which belonged to another ; if thou hast never dimmed the lustre of thy name by the open act of dishonesty ; yet, has just payment never been delayed, while the infant of thy creditor was hungry, and its mother in rags ? Have we none of us ever been extravagant, contracting debts which we could not seasonably hope to liquidate ? Have we not been careless of things hired or borrowed, *because they were not our own* ? Have we not been forgetful, in detaining what was kindly lent, to the injury or discomfort of our friends ? Have we always been particular in the matter of buying and selling ? Is there not a proneness to over-rate, when the advantage to be derived, lies

on our side ; and to undervalue, when it is against us ? Servants ! if ye have been wasteful or negligent in the charge of your master's property ; and, either to screen a fellow servant, or to ensure some perquisite or gift, have caused him whom you serve, to be at more than just expense, ye have broken this commandment. And ye Masters ! if ye have been so hard in your dealings as to create temptation ; or so indifferent to the souls of these members of your family, as to lay a snare in their way, ye will have to answer for it, like Jeroboam of old, for having " made Israel to sin." How many conceive it no offence, to defraud the Government, under whose protection their lives and their property are secured. Is custom rendered always where custom is due ; and tribute never evaded, where tribute is due¹ ? Is there not an undue boast, quite unbecoming a Christian's lips, where *a bargain* has been made ?

¹ Rom. xiii. 7.

where ungenerous advantage has been taken in the exchange of property ; where defects have been glossed over ; and the soul thus stained with sin ?

Truly the deeper we go in the inquiry, our “sins seem to take such hold upon us that we are afraid to look up. Yea, they are more in number than the hairs of our head¹.” But, “let not your heart be afraid².” Where there is deep contrition, and faith to call on the Lord, mercy shall yet be found ; and “plenteous redemption³” from all your sins.

9. “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” Let not this commandment be supposed to brand him alone, who hath daringly gone before the Judge, and appealed to the presence of God to uphold him, while uttering what was false, to the injury of his neighbour’s fame. Or, who hath wilfully concealed the evidence,

¹ Psalm xl. 22. ² John xiv. 27. ³ Ps. cxxx. 7.

which would have cleared the innocent, and brought the guilty to justice. The command goes much farther than this. It should, indeed, humble every mind, at all disposed to exaggerate, or give a false colouring to facts; all, who are apt to slander the name, and ridicule the failings of others. It exposes the delighted listener, as well as the unkind narrator of remarks reflecting on others.—Who art thou, that judgest another? You presume to make excuse, that you are not bound to think a bad man, good; a foolish man, wise; that you are commanded, not to “put darkness for light, and light for darkness¹.” Let this be granted; and while we use our knowledge of character, in order to guard ourselves against imposition, all is well. Or, if you will be so true a Christian, as to go in the spirit of love, and *privately* caution one, whom you know to be erring, you will do faithful service in the kingdom of Christ.

¹ Isaiah v. 20.

How painful is it to learn, that our failings, which we have often mourned over at the foot of the Cross, have been a subject of ridicule to our brethren! Some, indeed, would not *speak out*, severely; but they will insinuate, and hint, and look unutterable things, with little of the spirit of Him who commanded, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." "Cast out the beam out of thine own eye¹." Be above the littleness of deriving amusement from human imperfection. Set a double watch before the door of your heart and lips, when the subject leads you to speak rather of persons, than of things. Let your charity hope, that what is hard to be understood in the appearance or conduct of another, is yet perhaps capable of satisfactory explanation. Bear to think differently from others, without feeling presumptuously confident that all your opinions are right, and your neighbour's wrong. Remember that one and the same object may be viewed in

¹ Matt. vii. 1. 5.

various shades of light. While St. John dwells most on the single principle of love; and St. James, generally, on works; and St. Paul lays the foundation of faith; and St. Peter descants on zeal; and St. Jude on the corruption of false teachers—St. John, St. Paul, St. James, St. Peter, and St. Jude, were preaching the *same* everlasting Gospel. Remember that Faith will soon melt into sight, and Hope pass away into actual enjoyment; but, that Charity, or Holy Love, will be the abiding perfection of redeemed souls, when we are standing, “in our lot,” before the throne of God.

10. Under the Tenth Commandment, is forbidden the desire of those earthly possessions, or faculties of mind and body, which, an all-wise God hath seen it good to withhold from us. “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts¹,” thus testified the

¹ Mark vii. 21.

Lord, who “knew what was in man¹.” And if we were careful to “keep the heart,” as before God, “with all diligence, knowing that out of it are the issues of life²,” how many grievous sins should we escape! Do we not see, at a glance, that adultery, murder, theft, and other crimes, could not be committed, if we were watchful in subduing the first risings—of impurity, of wishes for the property of others, of vindictive feeling? But alas! like our first parent, we are tempted to be dissatisfied; forgetting that God alloteth his children that which is best for each. Forgetting, that my neighbour’s abundance would perhaps be ruinous to my soul: that his elevation to honour (which *he* can bear) would make me bow before Satan. And that poverty, ill-health, or disappointment, are sent, as necessary, in order to forward our eternal happiness. We forget, at such moments of discontent, that we are setting ourselves

¹ John ii. 25.² Prov. ii. 23.

above the wisdom of God ; that from being dissatisfied, we shall proceed, unless we guard ourselves, to take unhallowed measures for promoting our supposed interests. That “the Judge of all the earth will do right¹ ;” and that it is madness in the vessel to say unto the potter, “why hast thou made me thus² ?”

I pray God that our hearts may be so wrought on, by that Spirit, who convinceth of sin, that we may be humbled in comparing what we are in attainment—with what we might have been, under grace, with that pure and sublime holiness of mind, which the Lord Jesus requires us to strive after, and the Holy Spirit assists us in obtaining, as a preparation for His heavenly kingdom. I trust it has been felt that the worldly man denies God, as well as the Atheist. And that the irreverent worshipper breaks the second commandment

¹ Gen. xviii. 25.

² Rom. ix. 21.

as surely as the idolater. Under the third, is convicted the swearer; but, they that give no heed to their prayers, are justly included. The fourth speaks terror to the Sabbath breaker: but, it rebukes those who mispend any portion of the Lord's day. The same Law, from which, as a Rule, "no jot or tittle is to pass¹," condemns every inward act of an undutiful mind towards parents, as well as open disrespect. We may be guilty under the sixth, by anger and malice, without having shed blood. We may have broken the seventh, though the gross act of adultery cannot be proved against us. Though not guilty of robbery, we must plead guilty under the eighth, if we have neglected or injured our neighbour's property. Scandal, and unkind remarks, and insinuations, make us culpable under the ninth, though we have not publicly uttered false witness. And discontent may have soured the mind against our lot

¹ Matt. v. 18.

in life, while not actually coveting any thing that is our neighbour's.

And thus, should meditation on the close-searching word of God, "sharper than a two-edged sword¹," lead us to pray more and more for the Spirit, to know ourselves. And while we are moved to cry "Lord have mercy upon us! for past sin," may we as anxiously supplicate with a view to the renewing of our souls—"Lord! incline our hearts to keep these laws."

In proportion as we become more earnest in religion, the habit of justifying ourselves will give way to lowly, abasing views of the character in which we must appear, in the sight of a perfectly Holy God. Who could bear the thought of relating every act, and imagination, and scene of life, to the dearest friend upon earth? But, are they not all known unto God, the searcher of hearts? "I am the chief of sinners²," exclaims St.

¹ Heb. iv. 12.

² 1 Tim. i. 15.

Paul, in the bitterness of his compunction. Are we less to be accounted sinners than he, whom the Lord Jesus calls “a chosen vessel¹?” He, who was caught up into the third Heaven? Here is the list of our offences, read out against us by our consciences, and we must each plead guilty. In the prospect of approaching death, we look around for some one to have pity on us: but, there is no man who can redeem the soul of his brother. Each of us has a burden beyond what he can bear. We see the page grow darker, as we trace the undeniable proofs of a corrupt heart, and erring course. Even they, that have “feared God in their youth, loved Him in their age, and have laboured through life to preserve a conscience void of offence;” who have by daily repentance and continual Faith, “walked with God²”—even they, build not on their own righteousness, but on “the righteousness which is of God by Faith in Jesus.” “And

¹ Acts ix. 15. ² Gen. v. 24. ³ Rom. iii. 22.

if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear¹?" We cannot undo sins that we have committed. We cannot supply the place of services neglected. Each instant has its own assigned duty: and all that we can do hereafter, is so far from making expiation, that it will be, in its imperfection, adding to the charge. Alas! every offering from man's hand is, in some degree, defiled. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death²?"

"Come unto me," there is a voice from Heaven, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you³." "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out⁴." "Sing, O ye Heavens, for the Lord hath done it. Break forth into singing, all ye lower parts of the earth⁵." "Glory be to God on high, and in earth peace. Good will hath come even unto men⁶." Praise

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 18.

² Rom. vii. 24.

³ Matt. ii. 28.

⁴ John vi. 37.

⁵ Is. xlv. 23.

⁶ Luke ii. 14.

the Lord, for He hath sent His Son to suffer, in the place of what we have deserved. His Spirit now waiteth to be gracious, and to move upon the heart. "Draw nigh unto Christ, and He will draw nigh unto you¹."

Turn the commandments thus searchingly, into serious self-examination—that so you may come humbled and thankful, to the feast of the Lord's Supper. "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts²." "Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation³." Welcome those offers, which were signed and sealed for you in your Baptism. Ratify them now, each of us, in our own case, if any have hitherto held back. Take the Lord for your God. Look to Christ as your Saviour, and follow the strengthening help of the Spirit, in the ways of new obedience, till you come to the measure of the full stature of Christ. May we strive after a high de-

¹ James iv. 8.

² Ps. xcv. 8.

³ 2 Cor. vi. 2.

gree of sanctification, and a full hope of life eternal. May that Spirit so work within us, that we may cry unto God, with all sincerity—"Lord, have mercy upon us; and write all these thy Laws in our hearts, we beseech Thee."

SERMON V.

COMMUNION OFFICE.

1. Cor. xi. 26.

“AS OFTEN AS YE EAT THIS BREAD, AND DRINK THIS
CUP, YE DO SHOW THE LORD’S DEATH TILL HE
COME.”

IN the two former discourses on the Communion Service, it has been my endeavour to state the origin of this part of our Liturgy, and the ancient mode of its celebration ; with an undisguised expression of regret, that the first portion, should be so frequently severed from the participation of the Lord’s Supper.

My next object was to draw your attention to the discipline of the Church ; as re-

quiring a less restrained system of communication between the pastor and his flock, on the vital subject of Religion; and enforcing the separation of any unworthy member from the body of the communicants. In the absence of this spiritual controul, I set before you the ten Commandments, as a help to the examination of the heart; in order that they who desire to attend, may so “judge themselves, that they be not judged of the Lord.”

In the present discourse, that part of the service, will be considered, which embraces the Collects, and the introduction of a portion of Scripture, generally from the New Testament, with the Nicene Creed : and which, the communicants having been invited and admitted to the table of their Lord, is closed with giving of thanks for this high privilege, and with prayer for a due appreciation of this inestimable gift.

The prayer commending our Sovereign to the guidance of God, being offered up,

at the end of the Commandments, we read after the Collect appointed for the day, a select portion of the New Testament from one of the Epistles, the congregation sitting: and then, a portion from one of the Gospels, the congregation standing: in order to mark our reverence for the Master above his messengers. Not that there is any higher authority attached to the Gospels, than to the Epistles: for “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God¹.”

These passages of the Old and New Testament, commonly termed the Epistle and Gospel for the day, have been used in the Church for 1400 years. And, from St. Chrysostom, we learn the goodly old custom of ascribing Glory to God, on the Gospel being announced; as angels did, when the glad tidings were first heard at the coming of Jesus in the flesh.

The Collect will be found, generally, re-

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

cognizing some leading points in the Gospel or Epistle ; and always richly imbued with the spirit of devotion, although compressed in so few words. How varied is the mode of addressing God ! He is invoked usually by some attribute arising from the subject of the petition ; and thus, in turn, all the properties of the Heavenly nature are expanded before the devout mind. His might, and readiness to hear, and love to His creatures, are displayed. He is represented, as a refuge, protector, and the author and giver of all good things. He is described as the Being by whom our desire to pray is imparted ; the Fountain of all wisdom, who hath caused Scripture to be written for our learning ; the everlasting God, hating nothing that He hath made, and forgiving the sins of all that are penitent—a God, who through his only begotten Son sent as a sacrifice, has opened to us the gate of everlasting life ; causing Him to die for our sin, and to rise again for our justification. We behold Him, by faith, showing

to them that be in error, the light of His truth ; ordering the unruly wills and affections of His people ; teaching the hearts of His faithful people ; never failing to help and govern His children ; preparing for them that love Him, such good things as pass man's understanding ; declaring His Almighty power, most chiefly, in showing pity and mercy ; giving more than either we desire or deserve ; the God whom truly to know, is everlasting life. We are taught to reverence Jehovah, as the triune God, by grace vouchsafed from Himself ; as ordaining and constituting the services of angels and men, in a wonderful order ; as building His Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being himself the chief corner stone ; and knitting together His elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of His Son. How happily with these sublime and gracious exhibitions of the Divine nature, does the confession harmonize, of our weakness ; having no power of ourselves to help our-

selves ; our not being able to stand upright ; our putting trust in nothing that we can do ; our leaning only on the help of His Divine grace ; our prayer for new and contrite hearts ; our desires for perfect remission and forgiveness of our sins through Jesus Christ.

How reverent in tone, how spiritual in their tendency, are these excellent prayers ! Of the Collects, *forty* are taken from *ancient Liturgies* : others are altered from the older forms. A very few—the first three for Advent, those for Christmas-Day, Ash-Wednesday, and for the grace of charity—were drawn up by our venerable reformers. Observe, how well this part of the Communion Service, (for such it is, though little regarded in this light,) has been arranged. Preparation for the coming of Christ, proclaimed in the Advent Sundays, is followed by devotions for celebrating His birth, circumcision, and manifestation to the Gentiles. Then, the course of divine teaching carries us, in the services for the following Sun-

days, through His doctrine and miracles, His sacrifice, resurrection, ascension, and the coming of the Spirit; and the whole is summed up in the service for the festival of the Trinity.

The next division, from Trinity Sunday, is directed to the establishment of holiness, as the fruit of faith: a faith engaged in all those mysterious circumstances of Christ's life, on which we have been called to meditate; and feeding on the heavenly instruction conveyed in the discourses, parables, and miracles of the Lord.

The Saints' days, also, were of very early observance in the Church; being kept at the Martyr's tomb in some cases; and intended to excite us, by the observance thereof, to continue Christ's faithful soldiers, and servants, in imitation of them, who are gone up on high to rest from their labours. And all these divine subjects seem condensed in the Nicene Creed, next used; a confession of faith, drawn up in the year 321, at Nice, by a council of three hundred

Bishops, assembled to rescue the truth of our Lord's divinity from the false doctrine of the Arians.

At this juncture in our Communion service, a painful contrast with the devout habits of the early Christians, is presented. For, after having joined in the prayers and thanksgivings to Almighty God, and listened to a sermon—by far the greatest part of those present, in most congregations, turn away from the Lord's invitation to "come unto Him;" and, with seeming indifference, quit the house of God. Are we, when we come to Church, in a state of humble faith and penitence before God, or not? If not, our very prayers are a mockery. If we are striving to live, not to ourselves, but "to Christ," and are capable of prayer, we are surely in a state to derive strength and peace from the Lord's supper.

2. The service proceeds with the *Offertory*—"Let your light," &c.; and in the primitive Church, *offerings* were reverently

made, at this time, of bread and wine, and other necessities of life. From these free-will offerings, a portion was devoutly placed on the altar, for the celebration of the holy feast. The remainder was entrusted to the Bishop of the diocese, to be dispensed at his discretion.

The worshippers are next invited to pray for the whole body of Christ's Church, engaged in their warfare, here on earth. Intercession ascends for all Christian rulers; for all Bishops, and ministers under them; for grace on all the Lord's people; and for the support of all, under the various probations of this transitory life. And thanks are duly rendered for those, who have been enabled to persevere unto the end, departing this life in God's faith and fear: with earnest desire expressed, that, following their good example, we may share with Jesus in the triumphs of His kingdom.

To this, succeed three most impressive addresses. The first sentence only, from one of these, it is usual to read, in giving

notice for the Lord's supper. The two former exhortations are omitted in some prayer books (not printed by the Universities); and so little known are these two admirable appeals, that on a clergyman fully delivering one of them in giving notice for this Sacrament, he was afterwards thanked by a member of the congregation, for his excellent instruction.

They are well worthy a careful, devout study at home. They tend to awaken feelings of deep humility, by creating enquiry into the state of our hearts. They urge gratitude, in consideration of Christ's amazing love, and abasement of Himself for us.

They warn off, indeed, from holy ground, the hinderer, and blasphemers of God's word; the sensualist, the uncharitable, or any living in unrepented sin. But, while they seriously caution us, against rushing hastily to the sacred banquet of grace, they also admonish of the danger incurred by ourselves, staying away from the Lord's supper, in defiance of a direct command.

The safe method is suggested, of trying and examining the heart and ways before God, according to His plain directions. And in the case of any scruples arising, you are advised in them to state the same in confidence, to those who are appointed by the Lord in His Church, to “watch for your souls as they that must give account¹,” at the great day.

The character of the Sacrament is thus declared—that every one who brings a penitent heart, and lively faith, eats the flesh of Christ spiritually; and spiritually drinks His blood; and is one with Christ and Christ with him. What words are these! But are they of higher import than those of Jesus Himself? “Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him².” Or, than those of St. Paul: “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup of blessing which we

¹ Heb. xiii. 17.

² John vi. 54.

bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ¹?" Dispute not as to the *manner*, in which a closer union of spirit takes place between Christ and His members. "The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not to be sought for, in the Sacrament; but in the worthy receiver of the Sacrament²." Only believe; "All things are possible to him that believeth³."

Ample encouragement is thus held out to all, who repent truly for their sins past; have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ their Saviour; are amending their lives, and are in perfect charity with all men.

But, lest any should be tempted to come, moved by the freeness of the invitation, not having on the "wedding garment," a solemn warning is added—that they who partake unworthily (that is, without godly sorrow for sin and endeavours to follow Christ faithfully) that such persons eat and drink their own damnation.

¹ 1 Cor. x. 16.

² Hooker.

³ Mark xi. 43.

This word has doubtless frightened away persons, to whom it was never intended to apply. *It does not mean eternal damnation.* It means, they eat and drink, so as to bring *a judgment* upon themselves. This is the literal meaning of the word used by St. Paul. In this sense he himself explains it, saying, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and some sleep¹”—that is, have their lives shortened. In this sense, our Church understands it; for she adds immediately after, “We kindle God’s wrath against us. We provoke Him to plague us with divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death”—if we come, “not considering the Lord’s body.” Ministers have no right, in reading the service, to alter any word: but it is our duty to explain and apply terms, according to the Bible, and the sense of the Church.

My brethren, is this language too strong? Would ye have a person come to that table,

¹ 1 Cor. xi 30.

“not considering the Lord’s body?” Would ye have a person partake thereof, whose habits of life are profane, or dishonest, or unchaste, or violent, or intemperate, or hypocritical, or uncharitable? Is it not a wiser course, to warn such persons, and to say unto them, “Judge yourselves, that ye be not judged of the Lord?¹” Overcome your love to sin, by constant seeking of God’s grace; have a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ; amend your lives; and be in perfect charity with all men; and thus shall ye be meet, and accepted partakers of those holy mysteries.

Among other distinguishing names of the Lord’s supper, it is called the Eucharist, or office of thanksgiving. And the Church recognises this title, by adding, that although deep penitence, firm reliance on the merits of the blood of Christ, and faithful efforts for growing in grace, are essential to our deriving benefits therefrom, we

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 31.

must, above all things, give *most humble and hearty thanks* to God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We must celebrate the praise of each Divine Person in the Godhead, for the gracious share, severally taken by the everlasting Trinity, in the redemption of the world. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. The Son did humble Himself even to the death upon the cross for us. He beheld us miserable sinners, as we lay fast bound in the darkness and shadow of death; and gave Himself for us, that we might, by His Spirit, be made the children of God, and exalted to everlasting life.

Next, we are admonished, that Christ Himself hath instituted this feast; that the expiring Saviour ordained these holy mysteries; that He hath appointed them, in order that we should always remember the exceeding great love, which our Master and only Saviour hath manifested, by dying such a death. But this is not all: He makes them pledges of His love, as well

as remembrancers of His sufferings. And they who partake in the spirit of Christian disciples, are thus assured from heaven, that God is to them a Father ; Jesus, a Saviour ; and the Holy Ghost, a Comforter to the soul.

The address concludes with an earnest call, to praise the glorious Redeemer, in conjunction with the Father, and the Spirit: and the best proofs of a devoted heart are declared to be, entire submission to His most holy will ; and careful study to be obedient in true holiness, and righteousness, all the days of our life.

And next the cheering call is heard, to draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to our comfort ; and to present ourselves, meekly kneeling on our knees.

Thus invited, confession of our unworthiness is made by us, in the lowliest terms. The great God is invoked as Almighty ; as Maker of all things, and Judge of all men. He is approached with the more endearing title, “ Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ." Our sins are laid bare, as not confined to time, or place, or outward deed ; but manifested before Him in word, yea in thought. The heinousness of them is magnified by the reflection, that they have been committed against *such* a God : and lamentation is poured forth, that His wrath and indignation have been most justly provoked by us. But what words, if we be sincere, can express more heart-piercing sorrow ? The grievous remembrance ; the burden too heavy to be borne. In the same breath do we desire, not only the forgiveness of all that is past ; but, that being thus cleansed, even to the present moment, we may henceforth serve our most merciful Father, in newness of life.

To the lowly spirit, most soothing is that Absolution which follows ; expressed in the form of a hearty desire, that God, now present, will, according to His promise, pardon and deliver from all sin ; confirm and strengthen true believers in all good-

ness ; and bring them to everlasting life. And hear how comfortable are the words that next are heard, which our Saviour Christ saith ; and which, all who truly turn to Him, may apply unto themselves. “Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden ; and I will give you rest ¹.” “So God loved the world ; that He gave His only begotten Son ; to the end, that all that believe in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life ².”

Listen also to the sustaining assurance of St. Paul, that to save sinners, Christ came into the world ³ : and to those of St. John, that if any man sin, there is an Advocate with the Father ⁴, pleading for mercy in our behalf, Jesus—who is the propitiation for our sins, and hath satisfied the Divine justice.

The service deepens as we proceed in sacred adoration : having been reconciled

. ¹ Matt. xi. 28.

² John iii. 16.

³ 1 Tim. i. 15.

⁴ 1 John ii. 1.

to God ; having professed our charity towards all men, we are summoned to enter within the heavenly places : and in words so ancient, as to warrant belief of their proceeding from the inspired Apostles, we “lift up our hearts to the Lord.” And in the very congregation (though unseen by fleshly eyes) of angels, and of archangels, and of all the company of heaven, we ascribe all glory to Him that sitteth on the throne ; crying Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High ¹. As Moses, we read, hastened and bowed himself before the Majesty of God, so do we, overpowered with the gloriousness of such worship, make speed to prostrate our souls ; to declare, that we do not presume to approach the Lord’s table with any trust in our own righteousness ; feeling, that we are not worthy to gather up the crumbs under His table ; and cast-

¹ Is. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8. Jer. v. 14. Ps. xcii. 1.

ing ourselves on the compassion of Him, whose property is—always to have mercy.

And in this abased frame of heart, we beg God for help, that we may so eat the flesh, and drink the blood of His dear Son, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His body; and our souls washed through His most precious blood; and that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us.

Let me, before quitting this subject, invite your attention to those prefaces for particular holy days, which precede the Hymn “Therefore with angels, &c.” They tend to fix our hearts on the leading points of Christ’s humiliation and glory; and are expressed in terms of the most accurate and elevated character.

The service proceeds with the solemn consecration of the bread and wine. After prayer, reciting the death of Christ, as a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sin (not of a few, but) of the whole world; after desiring, that all who receive, may be partakers

of the body and blood of Christ, not merely commemorating his death, but having the divine life which has been communicated to the soul, quickened and confirmed, the priest enters on that mysterious part of the service, whereby the broken bread and out-poured wine become holy in their use and signification; and are rendered effectual vehicles for conveying pardon, grace, and salvation to the true Christian, as a member of the mystical body of the ascended, yet present, Saviour. What calm and devout gratitude should fill the heart, as the intercession successively arises, that the body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, given for us individually, may preserve our bodies and souls unto everlasting life! And fervently should our hearts respond to the petition, that we may not only eat and drink, in remembrance that Christ died for each of us, but feed on Him in our hearts, by faith; that we may be Christ's members, not in name only, but in our very nature; and be thankful. We receive, kneeling, as the

most proper attitude for a sinner, welcoming the assurance of his forgiven state; expecting increase of grace, and hailing the pledge of a glorious resurrection. The ancient Church never used to receive in a sitting posture, but always *with adoration*¹. Sometimes the communicants stood, and bowed their bodies: at other times, knelt at the altar.

It is a grievous mistake to suppose that the Eucharist is, merely, a sacred meal; for Scripture particularly mentions that our Lord instituted this solemn ordinance "*after he had supped*"².

And here let me suggest, that whatever book be brought up to the altar, as an aid to piety, may be shut, at the time of these words being repeated by the minister. To follow him, in silence and attention, with faith resting on Jesus, as crucified for *thee*, will be found more edifying to the soul. Before, indeed, that he addresses himself

¹ Vide Bingham, B. 15. C. 5. S. 3. ² 1 Cor. xi. 25.

to the communicant, and afterwards, advantage may be reaped from some serious meditation, with or without a book; but at the very time, undivided heed should be given to the important words which he is uttering.

Remember, at this Sacrament, to carry out your devout thoughts to all your own bodily and spiritual needs; to those of your family, the people of Israel, and the ignorant heathen; our Church, our country, and to all that name the name of Christ. Yea, strive to embrace the universal Church in your heart. Regard those in Paradise, no less than those on earth, as all sharing in the common benefits of Christ's love; and anticipating a common home in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

3. The third part, or the post-communion, begins as the ante-communion, with the Lord's Prayer; reminding us especially of our reconciliation in Christ, and union of hearts, as brethren in the Lord. As we

commenced, with prayer, that we might not be unworthy receivers, so do we, in the same spirit of humility, entreat the Lord to accept the sacrifice of praise, which we have rendered : and to grant, that not only we, but all His whole Church, may find pardon, and all other benefits of His passion. And these benefits, our Catechism represents, as the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by bread and wine. The sacrifice of the Law was a dumb animal. We offer ourselves, each, as a *living* sacrifice in soul and body ; beseeching the Lord not to weigh our merits in the scale of strict justice, but to pardon our offences for Jesus' sake. In the other prayer, not so often used, we bless the ever-living God for having fed *us*, who have duly received, with the spiritual food of Christ's most precious body and blood. We rejoice before God, in the assurance hereby imparted, that we are sharers in his favor and goodness, and incorporate members of the

blessed company of all faithful people, of which body, Christ himself is the head. And we pray God for strength, that we may do such good works as He has prepared for us to walk in.

Then, with triumphant hearts, we celebrate the Divine praise in the hymn "Glory be to God;" a hymn, with which angels opened the Gospel of peace; and with which the early Church concluded this most solemn ordinance of devotion. Thrice is it repeated in the Liturgy of St. James, the first bishop of Jerusalem; and in the Greek Church, to the present hour, it forms a part of the daily service.

If ever, our hearts are earnest in seeking pardon; if ever, we are praying from the soul and not in word only, it is surely after the celebration of Christ's dying love; after His imparted strength to the mind; after peace infused into the timid conscience. It is, when we worship, we praise, we bless, we glorify, we give thanks, in the Spirit, unto the Father. It is, when we beseech

Jesus, at once, as Lord God, and Lamb of God, in repeated invocations—Him, who, taketh away the sins of the world, to hear our prayers, and have mercy upon us; ascribing perfect holiness to Him, who with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, is one God, world without end.

Such, is our service; so ancient and scriptural; so full of adoration to the Lord God, and love to the Saviour. Such, is the penitential feeling which it tends to excite. Such, the deep convictions of sin which it tends to awaken; and the joyful hope of purified affections held out therein. What views of Christ's atonement does it present! What assurance of continued union with Christ; and of our deriving, through Him, strength, comfort, victory. Remember, I beseech you, that it is not a bare commemoration of Christ. But an ordinance of God, for conveying sanctify-

ing vigour to the soul from Jesus Christ, as the fountain of life. How do we flee to every human help to prolong this fleeting shadow of earthly existence! And shall we be indifferent to the securing our spiritual life? Can a man believe that Christ died to procure his salvation, and that he cannot reasonably hope to be saved, but in the way appointed by his Lord, and yet, refuse to partake of the chief instrument vouchsafed for making him fit for the kingdom of Heaven? How any persons, who profess themselves really anxious to live for Christ, can *altogether* withdraw themselves from the Lord's Supper, is a mystery! Must it not make us fear, that there is some sinful desire or doing, indulged, which oftentimes hinders the approach? O that we could see congregations bearing some proportion to the inhabitants; and the communicants bearing some proportion to the body of the congregation! That we could behold the young coming forward to put on the impenetrable armour of grace;

and the man of business, rejoicing to lay his burden of care at the foot of the cross ; and the aged, within a few steps of the eternal world, fearing to disobey the last command of their blessed Redeemer ! Remember the zeal of the early Christians ; and receive, *as often as you may*, these tokens of love, no less sure to faith, than if an angel's hand were the bearer.

Have we not sin to answer for, and be purified from ? “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin¹.” Have we not need of help ? “My strength is made perfect in weakness².” Have we not blessings to acknowledge ? And do we ask, What reward shall we give unto the Lord, for all the benefits which He hath done ? “I will receive the cup of Salvation ; and call upon the name of the Lord³.”

¹ 1 John i. 7. ² 2 Cor. xii. 9. ³ Ps. cxvi. 13.

SERMON VI.

BAPTISMAL SERVICE.

ST. MARK i. 8.

I INDEED HAVE BAPTIZED YOU WITH WATER ; BUT HE
SHALL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY GHOST.

MANKIND are commonly in extremes. The few, who attain the golden mean, are often regarded as deficient in strength of mind ; while vehement abettors of some dogma or practice, are the great favourites, in the estimation of the world. The doctrine of the holy Sacraments has suffered from this extravagance of opinion. At one period, a man would hardly pass for a believer, unless he maintained that the Sacraments, without the possibility of failure, by a power inherent in themselves, communicated effec-

tual grace ¹. But at the present period, the two Sacraments are frequently mentioned together with prayer and preaching, under the general term—*Ordinances*; without any distinctive notice of superior character, imparted by the Saviour. And it seems to be forgotten, that the side of the Lord Jesus being smitten, as the emblem of his Church, forthwith came thereout blood and water. “This is he that came by water and blood: not by water only, but by water and blood ².”

Happy is it for us, that our Liturgy remains from century to century, the faithful expounder of Holy Scripture, and witness to the opinions held by those, who learned the truth, at the mouth of inspired Apostles. And in none of the services of the Church, has there been more care taken to follow the primitive model, than in the office for Baptism

¹ Vide Hooker, Ecc. Pol. v. 57. p. 329. Keble's Edition.

² 1 John v 6.

I. As Baptism was first celebrated in warm climates, this Sacrament was often administered by dipping the whole body—burying it as in a grave; either at the side of the river or lake. This mode we see adopted by St. Philip in baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch. Yet St. Paul felt no scruple in admitting the jailer of Philippi, at night, within the prison; where no method of Baptism could well have presented itself, save the pouring, or sprinkling, water on the person. It is not, however, the abundance of water that may be used, which procures grace: it is not the more impressive symbol of the body raised, as from death, in the water, to new life: it is not from hence that any blessing is obtained. It is—Christ, from Heaven, who baptizes with the Holy Ghost, those to whom his minister, in the name of the triune God, applies the element of water sacramentally.

When Christians had rest from their enemies, they established a Baptistery, or place where persons should be baptized,

hard by the entrance to the Church. Yet even then, inconveniences arose, which justified a less objectionable mode of Baptism. In accordance with the usage of the early Church, our fonts are generally situated near the chief entrance into the House of God; in order to impress our minds with a devout feeling of admission, by this Sacrament, into the Church of the Redeemer.

As to Sponsors, or Godfathers and Godmothers, their appointment is of very early date¹. Since persecution brought the life of parents in continual peril, it was by the Church deemed essential, that God-parents should be chosen, pledging themselves, as guardians to the soul of the infant, if reduced to an orphan state; and helpers to the parents, in the religious education of the children, if they lived. Our Church does not allow the natural parents to undertake the office of Sponsor; because they cannot engage in a higher responsibility,

¹ Vide Bingham, vol. iv. p. 305.

than that which has already been assigned them by God.

Easter and Whitsunday, were the appointed seasons for baptizing in the Ancient Church. But according to our discipline, it has been considered, that if the child of an Israelite could become partaker of a covenant-blessing, so early as the eighth day, the children of the spiritual kingdom should find the way not less opened unto them¹. Hence the Church recommends, that infants be brought for acceptance in Christ, as soon as convenient after their birth²; on any Sunday or holy day; with a view to obtain a fuller intercession in their behalf from the worshippers present.

¹ Justin Martyr, in his Apology, written A.D. 148, mentions *many* persons of both sexes, some 60, some 70 years old, who had been made disciples to Christ *from childhood*. These, consequently, must have been baptized, in infancy, while St. John and others of the Apostles were alive. Apol. ii. 62.

² See, also, the well-known passage from St. Cyprian—that the grace of God should be denied to none as soon as born. Ep. 59. (al 64.) p. 158.

But previously to the infant being offered to the Lord, there is a duty owing from the mother. Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his great mercy, to preserve her in the great peril of child-birth, the Church calls upon every mother, professing to be a member of the Christian Covenant, to return hearty thanks unto God. “In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children¹.” How deeply must this remembrance of our fallen state, affect the heart, as the late deliverance is recalled! Yea, when it is impressed upon her heart, before the altar, how the sorrows of death came upon her and the pains of hell gat hold of her; how she called upon God in her trouble, and was heard. Now, may her soul turn again to its rest. Now should the resolution be formed, as though it had never been made before, I will walk before the Lord, in the land of the living. But not in her *own* strength is the vow undertaken. The humble hope sustains her, that help will be

¹ Gen. iii. 16.

afforded from above, so that she may faithfully walk according to God's holy will, in this life; that she may be finally saved, having put her trust in the Lord, and that God will be a tower of grace from all her spiritual enemies. And, as if to cover every imperfection, and supply all deficiency in human devotions, the Prayer of the Lord Jesus crowns her supplications.

This office, for Churching of Women, cannot be considered otherwise than as a most touching service; affectingly combining domestic feelings with public worship. And much is it to be desired, that all, who resort to the sanctuary to return thanks, would come in time for, and join heartily in, the previous service of the Church. And may every mother kneeling before the Altar, prepare herself, for returning a higher tribute of praise, when that Altar is spread for the celebration of the Eucharist. Let her not formally ask, What return shall I make unto the Lord, for all the benefits, which he hath done unto me; but faithfully

resolve, "I will receive the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord ¹."

II. Believing in "One Baptism—for the Remission of Sins," the Church guards against the repetition of this Sacrament, by inquiring, whether the child has already been baptized. After which, the Minister delivers an address to the congregation on the nature of Baptism. The awful truth is set forth—that all men are conceived, and born in sin; and that according to the words of Christ, none can enter the kingdom of Heaven, unless born anew, of water, and of the Holy Ghost. And prayer is urged, that God the Father will, of his bounteous mercy, bestow that, which, by nature, cannot be had, namely—the being made a child of God in Christ Jesus: and grant a comfortable pledge of this, by admission into his Church upon earth.

¹ Psalm cxvi. 13.

The congregation kneel, and supplication is made for this blessing. God is reminded, how, by water, Noah and his family in the ark were saved out of a perishing world : how, the children of the Elder Covenant were baptized in a passage of safety through the Red Sea ; how, the element of water hath received a hallowing character from its use, in the Baptism of his Son, Jesus Christ, in the river Jordan. The Most High is implored, of his infinite mercies, to grant, that the child now presented may be sanctified, set apart from an ungodly world ; may be received into the ark of Christ's Church ; and being endued with faith, and hope, and charity, as life proceeds, may, finally, after safely passing through the waves of this world of trouble, come to the land of everlasting life.

The Lord loveth earnestness in devotion : and in yet more fervent desires is he besought, as the aid of all that need, the helper of all that flee to Him for succour, the life of them that believe, and the re-

surrection of the dead, to bestow on the dedicated infant, remission of sins by spiritual regeneration : to give him grace, that he may enjoy the everlasting benediction of a heavenly washing, and may come to the eternal kingdom promised in Christ, our Lord.

The congregation, now rising, is invited from a portion of the Gospel by St. Mark, to ponder on the striking account of the Redeemer's gracious notice of the infants brought to Him, for obtaining a blessing. He took them in His arms, blaming and rebuking those who would have kept them from Him ; and exhorting all men to follow their pure and unworldly spirit. And from this tender compassion of our Lord's manner, the anxious friends of the infant are encouraged to cast away every doubt ; and earnestly to believe, that the Saviour will, as readily, embrace the present infant with the arms of His mercy, and make such an one a partaker of His everlasting kingdom.

Faith finds an easy vent in prayer ; and

this touching assurance of Divine love, carries the hearts of all present unto God. With devout gratitude is praise rendered, that we ourselves have been brought within the knowledge of His grace, and called to exercise faith in Him. And while lowly petition ascends, that this knowledge may be increased, and this faith confirmed in us evermore, more close intercession is offered, that the Holy Spirit may be vouchsafed to the infant, now brought before the Lord; that the child may be born again¹, and made an heir of salvation in Christ Jesus.

Baptism is the entrance into the covenant of grace. Among the Jews, sponsors were required to pledge themselves for the child

¹ It is painful to reflect on the angry discussions between the abettors and the oppugners of Baptismal Regeneration. If some writers have used the term Regeneration, where the expression Renewing would have seemed more correct; others have with the notion of the new *Birth*, confused the *continuance of life*, matured by the Spirit of God.

to be brought up “an Israelite indeed¹.” Through this channel, the custom probably obtained in the early Christian Church which was in government, discipline, and worship, a liberalized modification of the Jewish; a continuation of God’s ancient Church, spiritualized, rather than the substitution of a new one². But that the sponsors may be duly aware, that the baptismal grace, now given, may, *unless duly cherished, be stifled, and altogether sinned away*, the Church reminds them of the solemn and weighty charge which they are taking upon themselves, in behalf of another. She sets before them the extent of their petitions—namely that God would receive the infant; release the soul from the curse of original sin; give a sanctifying blessing through the Holy Ghost; and a share in the eternal glory of heaven. And she assures them, that the promise of Christ will unfailingly be performed.

Now then are they required, to make a

¹ Vide Bp. Jebb, Sermon xv.

² John i. 47.

vow, in the name of the child, binding on him, *if he would retain his privilege*, to renounce the temptations of Satan, the enticement of worldly vanity, and the pollutions of the flesh. This renunciation was substituted for the ancient mode of exorcising the evil spirit, and casting forth his tempting presence. A profession of faith is made by them, in the Father, Son, and Spirit, one God, as providing forgiveness, peace, communion of soul, and glory; and thus is the vow, taken by them, to be transferred in due time, to the yet unconscious infant; a vow—of lowly obedience to the faith of Christ, according to the revealed will of God.

That this is to be accomplished, not by the strength of man, but by the power of God, working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, how reverently does the prayer teach us, which now ascends—for the burial of the old Adam, and the creation of a new nature; for the death of all carnal affections, and for a life, from the Spirit, to

be granted ; for power and victory over hell, and man, and self ; for the attainment of heavenly virtues, and for the rewards of eternal mercy in Jesus.

The prayer of Consecration, over the water, follows. And He, that gave command thus to enrol the beings of a fallen world, among subjects of his spiritual kingdom, is humbly supplicated, to sanctify the outward element of water, to the mystical washing away of sin, to convey the fulness of Divine grace to the soul ; and to preserve the child ever among the faithful and elect before God.

The moment, precious to an immortal spirit, is now arrived, and the *Christian name* is demanded. Thus, when the Lord would confer a blessing upon Jacob, the name of Israel was granted unto him : and that of the father of the faithful was changed from Abram to Abraham, when he was received into covenant. He is now to become one of God's redeemed children, united to Christ, as a branch

to the vine; and his heart, unless the gracious intention of God be perverted, is henceforth to be the seat of the Comforter. At this moment, the name being assigned, not of his earthly kindred, but a name, marking his adoption into the household of heaven, the water of Baptism is applied to his body, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Then signed with the sign of the cross, he has a mark set on him, that he belongeth unto Christ; and henceforth must he fight the good fight of faith, without fear, and without shame, to the glory of God, as a good soldier and servant of Jesus Christ, unto his life's end.

This most appropriate and significant action (signing with the sign of the cross) is objected to by some. The only reason given is, that it is a popish ceremony. Grant, that for a long season it has been in use in the Romish Church. So has the Lord's Prayer. Shall we give up this also? As an expressive symbol of faith, in connec-

tion with Baptism, it can be shown to have existed in the early Church¹. And a writer, within 100 years of St. John's death, remarks², that they who wish to satisfy themselves of its being handed down to their age, can do this: and adds, that at meals, in lying down, in rising up, in going out, and coming in, the early Christians impressed this holy sign of the cross on their forehead. Mark well the moderation of our Church! The signing with the cross had become a superstitious form, and was *generally* discouraged. But, in their reverence for antiquity, as it had been devoutly used by the Primitive Church, it was retained on *one* occasion—in the Sacrament of Adoption into Christ's family.

All again kneeling, unite in the Lord's Prayer. We recall our own filial acceptance by invoking "Our Father." And hearty thanks are rendered to God, for adding another to the flock of Christ; for regene-

¹ St. Augustin. Sermon. 101. p. 290.

² Tertullian. Cor. Mil. chap. iii.

rating, and making the baptized one, His own child ; and for incorporating him into His holy Church. And we humbly beseech Almighty God, that, having been made partaker of such privileges as a heavenly birth implies¹, the newly dedicated one may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin, share in the glory of the resurrection, and triumph with Christ, in the everlasting kingdom.

Would that sponsors could be persuaded to read over the concluding address, not only before they engage in so holy an undertaking, but, occasionally, through life afterwards ! They would observe it acknowledged by them, as their bounden duty, to see, that the child be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, the vows upon him to his God and Saviour. They would be more ready to urge the necessity of his

¹ “ That infused Divine virtue of the Holy Ghost, which giveth to the powers of the soul their first disposition towards newness of life.”—Hooker on Baptism. Eccl. Pol. B. v. C. 60.

imbibing the elements of faith and holiness; and invite his mind to taste the blessings of Christian worship. They would excite their children in Christ, to follow the example of the Saviour, and become like unto Him. They would lead their little charges, dear in the Lord, to mortify every evil affection, and daily to advance in all virtue and godliness.

It rarely happens now, that we are called upon, except in cases of extreme illness, or apprehension of death, to perform that service in a private dwelling, which the honour of God requires to be celebrated in His sanctuary. When the office, however, is thus, from necessity, mutilated, the child, if life be spared by God, is in due time presented in the temple of the Lord, and openly received among the acknowledged children of God ¹.

¹ This is frequently called, being *half-baptized*—a term, which cannot be too much regretted, or too quickly forsaken.

But when childhood has passed away, and youth, in education and stature, is verging towards a riper age, then should the young disciple come forward before the Fathers of the Church, and desire to be Confirmed.

First, however, let due enquiry be made, whether they be sensible of their fallen, and restored condition. Have they learned, that there is in them still, an evil heart to be renewed—to be struggled against? Are they humble and penitent, under the fear of having oft defiled the whiteness of the baptismal robe? Perhaps in some, in many instances they have cast off, for a season, the Lord their God? Are they sensible of having sins to answer for? Are they aware of their constantly needing Divine grace, to heal and preserve their souls, and to make them partakers of the Divine nature? Are they drawing nigh, in faith, and sincere contrition? And, if hitherto restrained, by grace, from grievous failure, are they anxious to maintain a strict adherence to

Christ, as their only Saviour? Let such be brought, at the turning point of life and character, unto their heavenly Father. Let them receive confirming grace: and seek a fresh supply of heavenly help, in taking the vow of devotedness to God, on themselves. Let the young Christian, when asked, in the presence of God, if he be ready to ratify the promises made for him; if he be sincere, in living henceforth for heaven, (not for hell) let him be able to answer, without prompting, from his heart, I DO. Then will he hear with joy, that his help is in the name of the Lord: and he will bless the Lord; and his heart will send up his cry unto Him that heareth. How comforting will it be, on his eye anxiously glancing at the journey of life before him, in all its temptations and bewildering paths, to hear the intercessor upon earth, beseeching through the great Advocate in heaven, that he may be strengthened, and increased in godliness and knowledge, and the mani-

fold gifts of grace, and be *led onward, in a spirit of holy fear.*

The Apostles indeed conveyed, on the laying on of their hands, not only a spiritual blessing, but supernatural gifts of temporary benefit to the Church. These miraculous attestations passed away, when, in the sight of God, no longer necessary. But, let no man doubt, that Christ doth, to the present hour, at the mediating prayer of His servants upon earth, bestow a stablishing gift of grace, secretly vouchsafed to the inner man. If the young will faithfully pray for grace, they will experience a Defence from on high, in the continuance of God's favour : they will, if they be not false to Him that loved them even to the death, remain among the people of God for ever ; and daily increase in His Holy Spirit more and more, till they come unto His everlasting kingdom. Christ is with His Church to the end of the world, acting through the ministrations of His servants, in the word,

and sacraments, and the ordinances of the Gospel. And the hand of paternal benediction, now laid on the head of the young disciple, is a gracious sign of God's fatherly hand, guiding, restraining, and strengthening each in his stedfast course. Let them not fear! Directed, sanctified and governed both in their hearts and bodies, all they who seek the Lord, shall find themselves secure under His mighty protection, and be preserved in body and soul for evermore.

The office for the Baptism of those who are of riper years, was added at the last revisal of our Liturgy, A. D. 1661. During the wretched years of the great Rebellion, so grievous was the neglect of bringing infants to holy Baptism, that the Church found it needful to provide a service suitable to those, who were capable of giving an account of their faith, and fully comprehending the solemn vows undertaken. This service differs from the one for infants, in

the portion of sacred Scripture chosen ; it being that part of the Gospel, wherein Nicodemus is taught the mode of entering the Messiah's kingdom, outwardly by water : and assured of the mighty privileges of the new birth conveyed thereby from the Spirit. " Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven ¹." The addresses also are made to the individual himself, instead of his witnesses. And after receiving his renunciation of sin, his confession of faith, and his resolution, by the help of God, to live henceforth in the Lord, the minister pours on him the water of Baptism ; and under the purifying Spirit, he enters the new life, a regenerate soul. He is forthwith reminded, that having put on Christ, and being made a child of God, and of the light, he is bound to walk answerably to

¹ St. John iii. 5. Vide Hooker Eccl. Pol. B. v. c. 59. 3. In which he asserts " the general consent of antiquity agreeing in the *literal* interpretation" of these words.

his Christian calling; and that he must seek to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is plainly then a just interpretation of Scripture, according to the learned and pious fathers of the Church, that where Baptism is rightly received, the soul is regenerate, or new born, and is grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God, by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed. Faith is confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer unto God¹. In the case of infants, who cannot, by any wilful wickedness, oppose the grace of God, we may joyfully believe, according to the views of the primitive Church, that they are washed clean from Adam's descending guilt and defilement, taken into the blessed company of God's children, joined to Christ

¹ Vide Twenty-seventh Article of the Church—Baptism.

by the communication of a Divine life, through His Spirit, and placed within the influence of covenanted grace; so that, if they fail of salvation, no blame shall presumptuously attach to Him, who would have all men to be saved.

Nor may we doubt, that when a grown person comes to the font, convinced of sin, penitent, looking unto Jesus as the Author and Finisher of faith, and seeking grace to live for the world to come—the promise is no less surely fulfilled. Released from all past sin, he also is born anew, and made an heir in Christ of everlasting salvation¹.

When so many are brought to receive Baptism from custom, or from a view to worldly advantage, and are seen to grow up without regard for God, their Saviour,

¹ As soon as baptized, and not till then, was the adult disciple of the Primitive Church allowed to address God in the Lord's Prayer, as "Our Father"—a fact, clearly marking their sense of the Baptismal privilege.

their Sanctifier, or their own souls, the faith of some is shaken. They are tempted to ask, Can such a mysterious change take place, as warrants the term in Scripture, *new born*—yet no difference be perceived in after life? If a heavenly seed were thus planted in the heart, should we not see some decided efforts at growing in grace? The process, be it remembered in reply, is illustrated by the most *secret* of natural causes, the blowing of the unseen winds of heaven. It is the very essence of faith, to believe, not because we discern, but, because God hath said. Are we not moreover apt to confuse, between the *first* communication of Divine grace to the soul, which is *passive*, in *Regeneration*; and the *Conversion* of the heart, *actively* engaged towards God? Do we not mistake between the earliest dawn of an inward life, and the bright course of spiritual manhood? Do not many understand by *Regeneration*, what the holy Scripture more commonly designates, *Renewing*? “Not by works of righ-

teousness, which we have done, but, according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of Regeneration, AND the Renewing of the Holy Ghost ¹. Wherein consists the difference between St. John's baptism, and that of our Lord, except in this—that the Holy Spirit is communicated in the baptism under the Gospel? “*As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ* ².” “*Baptism doth now save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God* ³.” Feeble indeed, is the spark of natural life in a new born infant. But because he cannot forthwith reason, or pray, lift up his voice in the Church or the Senate, or lead an army against the enemy, are we to affirm that real life is not within the child? He may be of a sickly habit, deprived of reason, cut off like a flower, by the scythe of death—are we to deny that

¹ Titus iii. 5.

² Gal. iii. 27.

³ 1 Pet. iii. 21.

he was ever *born*? Some have been heard to assert their belief, that infants are not *capable* of Regeneration. Of what speak we? “Is any thing too hard for God ¹?” Cannot He that caused water to be the instrument of instantaneous cleansing, when applied with faith in His power, to the leprous body of Naaman; and made the pool of Bethesda, a fountain of healing at His angel’s touch, can He not, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, at the intercession of His Son, render the font of Baptism, the source of new life to the diseased soul? Will the effect be less perceptible, when the child, according to the Covenant, is trained to remember his Creator in the days of his youth, to draw nigh unto his Saviour, and seek for help utterly to abolish the whole body of sin? If, on the contrary, children are educated without care to awaken their consciences; if the pledge of devotedness to Christ’s service be not redeemed by their natural parents, their sponsors, and

¹ Gen. xviii. 14.

in due time by themselves—who shall charge the majesty of God, with indifference to their souls? And yet there is nothing more striking in the lives of persons who have gone headlong into sin, than the acknowledgment of warnings, arousings of conscience, gleams of conviction, persuasion of hope¹. Whence did these movements proceed, but from the Spirit of God grieved, not yet quenched? Do they not preach the doctrine, that a grace, freely given in Baptism, is not hastily withdrawn? Do they not enforce what the rich man from hell wished to be proclaimed to his brethren upon earth—Repent, and turn unto the Lord?

I do earnestly call on every parent to believe, on this subject, what the early Church believed, at the lips of inspired messengers from heaven. Believe, when you bring your babe to the font, that, as the element of water is visibly applied, the

¹ Vide Life of Rev. John Newton, and others.

life-giving grace of the Spirit may be expected. Beware! lest by unbelief, or other sin in this matter, you provoke God, to withhold the fulness of His love. Your child will not merely be enrolled in the visible Church, but BORN AGAIN¹, in a high and holy sense, and joined unto Christ the Saviour.

It cuts one to the heart, to see indifference, unbelief, levity, haste, or formality around the font. Realize, at that moment, the presence of the Father, Son and Spirit. Pray with faith for your dear child. Bring them when infants. Let not the sad spectacle be witnessed, of three, four, six children of the same parents, brought at the same time for baptism.

Provide sponsors, who will prove a help to you, cooperating in the work of sanctification. Let not the sponsors be hastily chosen; nor any invited to this important office, from a sordid regard to their wealth,

¹ "Baptism, wherein the mystery of our Regeneration is wrought."—Eccl. Pol. B. v. C. 62. s. 20.

rank, or patronage¹. Be prepared, with your Common Prayer in hand, to make those responses which the Church requires; and be not dependant on a prompter, on so solemn an occasion. Believe in your hearts, that a Divine grace is imparted, which, if you watch over your child, and pray for him; and teach him according to the Gospel, will surely spring up, and bring forth the fragrant blossoms and the heavenly fruit of holiness, under the dews of God's blessed Spirit.

We have all, I willingly hope, been admitted into the family of Christ, by the Sacrament of Regeneration. Have we seriously considered how great a trust was then committed to us? Great as the baptismal blessing is, through the unmerited goodness of the Lord, it may utterly be quenched by sinful neglect, or open rebel-

¹ In the judgment of the Church, none should undertake the office of sponsors, who are not *communicants*.

lion. Good were it for such men, if they had never been born again. How shall we answer it at the great day, if we have refused to humble ourselves, and believe? if we have hardened the heart in sin, which the Comforter had once taken for his dwelling place, and there would have inhabited for ever? Can we seriously reflect, that, in the hour of Baptism, we were brought back to a state of imputed innocence—and not deeply mourn over the transgressions, which, in childhood, in youth, yea in our present state, have often interrupted the enjoyment of Divine peace? Happy indeed, those of us (few, it must be feared) who have never lost their filial state of acceptance.

But for those who have erred and strayed, is not the door of mercy open? Flee again to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ! Seek to lay hold afresh, on the covenanted pardon, the assured grace! Strive to attain unto that power against sin—that peace of conscience, that joy in the Holy

Ghost, that fervent hope of life everlasting, which are the amazing privileges of the Believer. I tell you, on the word of God, “before you call, he will answer: while you are yet speaking, he will hear¹:” and “he that overcometh, shall finally be received among those, who have washed their robes *white* in the blood of the Lamb².”

¹ Isa. lxv. 24.

² Rev. vii. 14.

SERMON VII.

THE CREED.

MARK ix. 24.

“LORD, I BELIEVE—HELP THOU MINE UNBELIEF.”

THESE words were addressed to our Saviour by an afflicted parent, anxious for the recovery of his child. He felt that every thing depended on his being able to realize the power and readiness of the Lord to relieve him; he avows that he believes; yet, fearing for the event, and conscious of the weakness of his faith, he implores Christ to pity his infirmity, and to strengthen his dependence. Our Lord's miracles, indeed, form some of the best illustrations of mercy and grace proceeding from God:

and they as clearly explain the character of those dispositions, by which we bring the dealings of God home to ourselves. Now the faith of the distressed man in the Gospel, and the faith of the disciplined, the awakened, and the enlightened Christian, is the *same in principle*: while the object, to which the mind is directed, is different. *He*, had faith in Christ, as able to remove bodily disease; *we*, must have faith in Christ, as able and willing to take away the charge of guilt which lies against us, and to give us dominion over sin.

Having seen, in a former discourse, that pardon, grace, and salvation are covenanted in baptism to the true penitent; and that a *faith*, combining with repentance, and fruitful in love, is needful for us as hopeful members of the Christian covenant—it is desirable for us, now, to consider the revealed subjects which our faith embraces. And in order to assist the Christian herein, our Church sets before us, “all the articles of the Christian faith” collected together

in the *Creed*, which is a title expressive of the summary of our belief. How much labour, how much danger is saved by this ! Instead of every man having to search out for himself, through all the history, the prophecies, the psalms, the epistles, the discourses of the Bible, for the several points of faith, behold them clearly and impressively presented in this form ! Here they are, exhibited in words, which (if not actually set forth by the very *Apostles* themselves) certainly were embodied by those who came next unto, and knew the mind of the Apostles. Are we not more likely to drink the purest water from the spring itself ? The farther we go back, yea, to the earliest times of the Gospel, and the nearer we keep our minds to the teaching of those, who were inspired by the Holy Ghost, the *more likely* are we to arrive at “the truth as it is in Jesus¹.” Let

¹ Eph. iv. 21.

us pray, *that* Holy Spirit, who dwells within the Church, to give light to our dark minds, and bestow grace on us, not merely to profess our belief—but to believe with the heart—unto righteousness.

“ I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.” The foundation of all religion is—to believe that there is one God. *This*, the power, and wisdom, and harmony, and goodness around us, may abundantly teach. The convictions of conscience may fully persuade us of this. But, the Bible brings before us the great truth, at its very opening. It represents God—or the *good* Being—as making, out of nothing, all things that are in heaven and earth. God is declared to us, as never having a beginning of existence—and never capable of having an end. A SPIRIT—holy in Himself, and showing wrath against all sin ; as merciful, while just : and *this*, in all consistency, because He hath “laid help upon

One that is mighty¹ to save ; He has from all eternity, regarded man's sin, as borne away by "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

But the belief does not only speak of what God is *in Himself*. It proclaims what He is, in regard, and in relation to mankind, He is "*the Father*." In a general view, the Father of *all* : but in a peculiar sense, the Father of *all*, who, being elected out of a lost and corrupt world, are taken into a covenant of grace ; who, being adopted sacramentally into the family of heaven, are placed within the help and teaching of His Holy Spirit. But still in a higher sense, is God, *the Father*—even of those who *not only* have been called, but have welcomed the call ; who are united to the Son of God, by a living faith ; who are regarded *effectually* as children of grace, because of their connection with the only begotten Son of God ; who seek not their

¹ Psalm lxxxix. 19.

own glory, but the glory of their Father, which is in heaven. And thus we profess our belief in God the Father Almighty, who made us and all the world.

2. "In God, the Son, who hath redeemed us and all mankind." To redeem, is to purchase again, that which has been lost. We were all in a ruined condition : captives—slaves to the prince of this world. Christ, according to the everlasting covenant, paid down the price of redemption—even His own most precious blood (for "without shedding of blood is no remission of sin")¹. "He said to the prisoners, Go forth"²! This redemption is wrought for *all* mankind. Certain benefits are derived through Christ, which are *more* than a compensation for what has been forfeited in Adam. But who is this King of glory—that hath so redeemed us? It is the Lord Jesus Christ—the only Son of God. Our Saviour, in His divine nature, is "begotten

¹ Heb. ii. 22.

² Is. xlix. 9.

of God, before *all* worlds." "Begotten *not made*;" for *then* would he have been a creature. He is "very God, *of* very God." *Jesus* means Saviour, and is the same as *Joshua*. *Christ*, signifies anointed, or the Messiah; seeing, that He was visibly anointed by the distinguishing baptism of the Holy Ghost, and consecrated hereby to His offices—*Prophet*, to reveal in all its fulness the will of God; *Priest*, to atone by His own sacrifice for man's sin; and *King*, to rule His Church by unseen authority; until He cometh again to glorify His people; and finally to judge the world.

But in, what manner was it ordained that God the Son should become the Saviour of the world? "Verily, He took not on Him the nature of angels," but of the seed of Abraham¹. In the nature which had sinned, redemption must be wrought out. But it must be a *holy* nature. "The Lord must compass a new thing²." The power of

¹ Heb. ii. 16.

² Jer. xxxi. 22.

the Holy Ghost was pleased to create a perfectly holy human nature—of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Thus, “*conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary*”—The divine Word took the manhood into God. He took not the nature of *a man* that had already lived: but He took on Him the nature of *man*, born out of the common course. “A body was prepared,” wherein God’s glory might become visible to man’s eyes; wherein a perfect obedience might be rendered; wherein a complete sacrifice for sin might be offered. “Lo, I come”—a voice is heard in the heavens, and a star of glory shines over the village of Bethlehem, and the first Christmas anthem is *that*, of angels singing “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men ¹.” With what feelings of abased prostration of soul, must we gaze, by faith, on that infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and

¹ Luke ii. 14.

lying in a manger ; when we say to ourselves, God is in that holy Infant : God is one with that holy Child of twelve years' old, submitting in all subjection to His mother, and His reputed father. *Yes, it is mysterious.* It is meant to be so. We are to veil our eyes, like the cherubs and seraphs, and *adore* ; not to lift the cover of the ark—not to touch it rudely—lest the Lord come forth with a breach upon us. God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. It is not merely the *man Jesus* ; but the Son of *God*, manifesting Himself in a *human* nature. God and man, one Christ ; who goeth about doing good, healing the sick, feeding the fainting multitude. It is God the Son, in the likeness of man, who walks on the roaring waves, raises Lazarus from the grave, casts out devils, preaches His Sermon on the Mount, discourses in parables, purifies the Temple, shines in the glory of His transfiguration, enters Jerusalem with hosannas, and the garden with prayer, smites the

conspirators to the earth with a word, and stands before the judgment seat of Pilate—the eternal Judge before the governor of a Roman province!

Had the Son of God, without tabernacling in flesh, proclaimed the everlasting gospel, from a throne of glory in the clouds—awful indeed, in the midst of mercy, would the message of grace have been—and soon, perhaps, forgotten, as *that* which was heard at Mount Sinai! But what could have compensated for the loss of such an example, as the innocent, devout, meek, patient, compassionate, undaunted Jesus? The very contrast of His lowly, unprovided, despised condition (with what shame does it cover our race, that *such* a Being should have been despised), the very contrast of His needs and humility, with the assertion of right to forgive sins on *earth*, and to pass sentence at the great day—is one of the most impressive features in divine revelation; and gains in force, instead of losing, by our increasing medita-

tion on Christ. Had Jesus not been *man*, as well as God, no sacrifice in the offending nature could have been made. Had not the blood of Jesus, been “the blood of God¹,” as Scripture declares, the propitiation for sin could not have been universal in its efficacy.

We left our Lord, like a sheep before the shearers, dumb, and opening not His mouth. But in His humiliation, all the judgment of justice was taken away. The malice of His enemies, because He re-proved their sin; the disappointment of the Jewish senate, because He would not give them earthly for heavenly glory; the envy of the chief priests and scribes, because He taught truth from God, instead of vain traditions and formal obedience, *prevailed*;—and the weak-minded, false-hearted rabble, that a few days before had been cutting down branches of palm trees, and spreading their garments before Him,

¹ Acts xx. 28.

to do Him honour—now, are led by the wicked influence of designing rulers to gnash their teeth against Him, without a cause ; and to cry aloud, Crucify Him ! crucify Him ! But before this sharpness of death, He suffered under the bloody stripes of the scourge, at the command of him, who had declared that he found *no fault* in this Man. “He suffered” indeed “under Pontius Pilate.” The Roman chronicles *stamp the fact*, with the name and date of this governor’s authority thus exercised—but we “need not the testimony of man.”

Follow now your Lord, with His true mourners (rewarded with His last words of sympathy), follow Him by faith to Calvary. There, behold those hands, that shrank not from touching the polluted leper ; those feet, which bore Him, day after day, on His journeys of love ! behold these, mangled with the sharp nails that fasten Him to the raised cross ! There, for more than three hours, does He hang, a spectacle to angels and to man. On the

“altar of that cross,” He makes a full atonement for all sin. There, He breathes forth His soul (when it pleased Him to lay down His life): “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit;” and when He had so said, “He *gave* up the ghost. *It* was finished.” All that the counsels of heaven had sanctioned, and the ingratitude of man had plotted, and the rage of hell had devised, was “finished:” and while Caiaphas mocked, and a sword pierced through the Virgin’s soul, God was reconciled, and “could be just, while the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus ¹.”

The cruel insensibility of a Roman soldier gave certainty of our Lord’s *death*, by piercing that holy side, from which the blood and the water (the pardon and sanctification of the two sacraments) issued forth, before the eyes of the beloved disciple. What scenes and sights followed !

¹ Rom. iii. 26.

The sun was darkened in the heavens. The Jewish curtain before the holy of holies, rent from the top to the bottom. The rocks clave asunder. The graves burst open. And a heathen voice of adoration (it is said by some—that of Cornelius) proclaimed, as the great herald of the sublime occasion, “Truly, this was the Son of God ¹.” Christ “was crucified, dead, and buried.” For now—they who had been *secret* disciples, came forward *boldly*—and he who had once come to Jesus by *night*—is bravely and openly professing his attachment; and the sacrificed Messiah (as the prophet had foretold) made His grave with the rich, though He had been numbered with the transgressors in His death ². A rock, which had been hollowed out with care, and had never yet received any *other* body, now admits those hallowed remains, with which the Godhead still was united, so that His flesh saw no corruption.

¹ Matt. xxvii. 54.

² Is. liii. 9.

But the *soul* of the Saviour, not less full of the Godhead, “*descended into hell*”—not the place of suffering, but Hades—*Paradise*—the abodes of the redeemed spirits. *Then*, must the full tidings have been heard by Abraham, rejoicing to see Christ’s glorious day. In that blessed hour, must Christ’s presence have shed on David’s spirit the fulness of joy. Then, would the little martyrs of Bethlehem, sing Hosannas around their Lord; and the latest triumph of the cross would be magnified in the penitent thief, who had so quickly realized the promise, “This day, shalt thou be with Me in paradise¹.”

The Jews had destroyed the fleshly temple, in which the Deity had tabernacled among them: but He that “had power to lay down His life, had power to take it again²,” and on the third day, Christ rose again from the dead.” “That Deceiver” (as His enemies yet *dared* to call Him, amid the

¹ Luke xxiii. 43.

² John x. 18.

awful manifestations of Divine wrath), an earthquake giving warning of "the first-fruits of them that slept," left His sepulchre, amid the attendance of angels. The stone was by divine power rolled away: an angel rested on it: angels sat fixed in adoring contemplation, at the head and the foot of the place lately occupied by the Divine body: the grave clothes were folded apart, "The Lord was risen indeed!" Thus was it proved, to our great comfort, that sin was forgiven, because the surety who had been imprisoned for us, was set at liberty; that *our* bodies also should rise, "every man in his own order¹;" that God was effectually reconciled, and man redeemed.

"He ascended into heaven:" but not till He had commissioned chosen witnesses to attest the fact, of His eating and drinking with them, after He rose from the dead; not till He had ordained His apostles as

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 23.

a body corporate, for carrying on His Church; not till He had infused a Divine power into that Church (whereof blessed be God *our* Church is a pure branch), whereby remission of sin, and restoring grace, should be conveyed—as through a divinely appointed channel of mercy; not till He had sent forth His Apostles, “*as* His Father had sent Him, with a promise to be *with them*” (in the persons of their successors) “even to the end of the world¹.” Then, led He them out to Bethany, and while bestowing His parting blessing, “He was received up into heaven,” followed by the sorrowing adoration of His bereaved Apostles, and sat in glory, “the glory which He had, before the foundation of the world²,” at the right hand of God.

But there, Thou art—Thou Son of the Blessed—beyond the neglect, and mockery, and cruelty of man, for whom Thou camest to die! Mighty Intercessor! Thou art gone

¹ John xx. 21.

² John xvii. 5.

up on high to bless us. Yea, though in heaven, Thou art ONE with all the people of God.

But "He will come again; and will finally *judge the world*," the *quick* (i. e. those who shall be alive) and dead, "for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son¹." They that are Christ's will rise at His coming: "the dead in Christ, shall rise first²:" *Then*, cometh the end; when that same Jesus, who once stood with his hands bound before Pilate, shall sit on the throne of glory in the heavens. "Before him shall be gathered all nations, and they that have done good, shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire³."

Having thus professed our faith in God, the Father; and in God, the Son, the Redeemer; we avow our belief in God, the Holy Ghost. We acknowledge one God in essence—Three Persons. We believe in—

¹ John v. 22. ² 1 Thess. iv. 16. ³ Matt. xxv. 46.

The Holy Ghost, that moved upon the waters, that was resisted by the apostate Patriarchs before the flood, that inspired the Apostles and Prophets — The Comforter, who “divideth grace to every man, severally, as he will ¹ :” the Giver of spiritual life, who washes us from sin, at Baptism ; and adopts us by regenerating grace into the family of Heaven, and daily renews the heart, by illuminating truth, by awakening convictions, by gracious persuasions, and gentle guidance. Yea, He sanctifies by awful warnings, arousing ; by heavenly strength, upholding ; by divine peace, comforting ; by causing the word of Christ to dwell richly in the soul ; by making us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

I believe “in the holy *Catholic* Church”. — not *Roman* Catholic, for that would be to limit what we at the same time profess to be universal : we profess to believe in a universal Church — or holy congregation

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 11.

of Christians, gathered from *all* nations, and not, as the Jews, confined to one people,—a divinely constituted society, established by Christ Himself; carried on by His Apostles, and handed down to our own times, by those set apart, in succession from them,—a family of God, embracing high and low, rich and poor, one with another; and sustained in soul, as to the living members, by the grace from the Lord, to be ministered by the stewards of His mysteries.

I believe in “the communion of Saints.” Yes, brethren, when Christians pray, it is not for themselves alone. The touch of devotion vibrates throughout the spiritual society of all who love the Lord Jesus, in heaven and in earth. Millions of blessed spirits and Christians, are praying for you, when such a thought is not in your mind; and you pray for millions, whom you will never know, till “the spirit hath returned to God that gave it.” We hold one faith, and are ruled by one Lord. We are

cleansed by one baptism : eat of one bread, and drink of one cup : one Father loves us ; one Saviour died for us ; one Spirit gives grace to make us holy. Through one gate of death, we go out of this world, and land on the shores of heaven with “*the forgiveness of sin*” purchased by the blood of Jesus, and applied to the conscience by the Spirit. And if *we* be among the pardoned and sanctified, we shall enjoy that everlasting life, where we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on us, nor any heat. But the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall lead us to fountains of living water ; and God shall wipe away all tears for ever ¹.

Much it is to be feared, that with too many, the Belief, this ancient and precious record of faith, is repeated with little feeling of devotion. Alas ! which of us must not plead guilty to our oftentimes saying the words,

¹ Rev. vii. 16.

while the long list of heavenly subjects is making no corresponding *impression* on our hearts? *Do we BELIEVE* these things? Have we faith in God, as once angry—now reconciled? Have we that faith in Jesus, which accepts Him, not merely as the teacher of a beautiful system of morality, but as the Giver of a free pardon to us, miserable sinners? Do we pray for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that we may be made *new creatures*? “The just shall live *by faith* ¹.” We are accounted righteous, only on the score of Christ’s merits. And the benefit of His cross is made over to the penitent, not merely as a *penitent*, but as one seeking mercy on the plea, of Christ suffering in the room of what we have deserved. Do you not see then the *value of faith*? To him, who does not believe in *that* which he has not seen, it is the same as if it did not exist. If any do not believe in God, then, to such an one, practi-

¹ Rom. i. 17.

cally there is no God. If you are not persuaded, that God sent His Son in an's nature, to live and die for us—you put yourself in the condition of one, for whom all the agony of Gethsemane, and the tortures of the crucifixion, have been undergone to no purpose: you undo in your own case (as far as you are able) God's work of mercy. If, again, you do not so far feel the corruptness of your nature, as willingly to call upon the Holy Spirit to carry on the work of grace happily commenced; or to enlighten, and restore you, you grieve and resist Him: yea, as far as your own good is concerned, you deny His existence; you make Him to be nothing, who is eternal.

But the central point of faith is, surrendering yourself to Christ as a Saviour, to take away your sin, and to train you by acquired holiness for heaven. This is the important point in faith: because it empties the proud heart, of self-righteousness; it makes us go as beggars, to the gate of mercy. It requires us to feel our wretch-

edness and want; and it finds a full supply of grace and love in the atonement of the Son of God. It is not merely believing—but trusting in, depending on—clinging to Jesus Christ, as the *only name*, through whom salvation can be received. He, that has been washed by the fury of the storm from the deck of the vessel, carried up to the heaven and down again to the deep, and lays hold on the rope, with difficulty cast within his reach, has *faith* in them that have succoured him, as anxious to drag him out of the depths. And thou, O perishing sinner! hast the promise of Jesus, that if you sorrow for sin, and trust to Him for redemption, He will save you from ruin and guilt; and purify you as one of His peculiar people, zealous of good works. You have not time to delay; at any moment you may be called; this night thy soul may be required. Turn unto the Lord, and He will never forsake thee.

But faith is not only for the beginner in religion. It is the vital principle. It

is as necessary for the whole Christian life, as breathing is for natural existence. If any feel that they have not *this faith*, which links the hopes of the soul to Christ, ye must pray to God, to *give you* this faith. And you must search your hearts; and humble yourselves for all sins, negligences, and ignorances: and ye must pray and strive to keep out of the way of *temptation*; and ye must burst through every open act of misdoing. Turn thou me, O Lord, and so shall I be turned; this must be thy constant prayer.

As to those, who, having examined themselves before God, to see whether they be in the faith, "have a good hope because of His word," they must not think of themselves as having *attained* to a certain point, whereat they may cease from diligence concerning their souls. They must pray for deeper convictions of sin, and livelier faith in Christ, and higher strivings after holiness. They must pray, each one, "Lord, I believe, help Thou

mine unbelief." In proportion as *faith* grows stronger and clearer, earthly things will lose their hold on the mind, will appear like the vexations or amusements of childhood; while heavenly things will be less frequently obscured. Faith is not implanted by the Holy Spirit, in order that we should sit down and profess, I have faith: but it is fixed within us, to be the mainspring of the spiritual works. It will bear us up, when in new scenes of trial; when perplexed as to our course; when distressed in our families; when in want; when we are tempted under any form. Read the eleventh chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, and see how every saint of old overcame by *faith*—by having a *power within*, which gave "evidence of things not seen, and substance to things hoped for¹." *Faith in Jesus*, which is the highest exercise of *faith*, will not only ensure strength, but "joy and peace." Be-

¹ Heb. xi. 1

lieving in Him, "as the way, the truth, and the life," *past sin* will cease to harass, because He taketh it away. *Besetting* sins, will no longer alarm, for He will give a power to *overcome* them. His honour is bound up in our conflicts. Be not afraid, only believe: and *sin* shall decay within you, and grace shall triumph. All things are possible "to him that believeth¹."

¹ Mark ix. 23.

SERMON VIII.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

LUKE xi. 1.

“LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.”

THE Church, as a public and authorized guardian under the Holy Spirit, presents us at the laver of Regeneration; and seals us with the sign of the cross, as the token of our being given up to the service of the Redeemer, while receiving a pledge *from* Christ, of our pardon, sanctification, and salvation. In that sacred hour, when we become the adopted children of God, the Church first exacts a solemn promise from our sponsors, that (with the covenanted help of the Lord) we should be taught to live a life of daily repentance, and lively

faith in Jesus. She next proceeds to set before us in the Creed, those vital truths of grace, which become embodied, as *Faith*, in the heart. Nor does she fail, in the most fitting place, to exhibit a spiritual view of the Divine will in the ten Commandments, that we may be led, at once, to flee to Christ, as a refuge from God's anger; and as a ruler in the ways of righteousness. But lest, in the natural pride of man, we should imagine ourselves capable of pleasing God by an obedience springing out of our *own* powers, she solemnly warns each child, that we are not able to do these things of ourselves — nor to walk in the commands of God, without His special grace, which we must learn at all times to call for, by diligent Prayer. And that we may never be at a loss for words of supplication, she directs our attention, at once, to the prayer taught us by the Lord Jesus Himself, and graciously intended, both as a form for our use, and as a guide for enlarged devotion. We

know indeed from humiliating experience, that we are apt to become careless, about what is familiar to us. And hence, if the truth were spoken, we should confess that we are tempted to offer up the Lord's Prayer, with less earnestness and application than any prayer which we use. Indeed, when we consider the force and extent of each petition ; what sublime and important matter is contained in the varied portions ; what a height of adoration is expressed ; what a depth of penitence ; what a fulness of desire against temptation and sin, we cannot but feel, that to utter this prayer with fervency, requires much recollection and thoughtfulness. Hence, in our Liturgy, we commonly find some short sentence coming immediately before the Lord's Prayer has been introduced, as a preparation of heart. " Lord, teach us to pray." Let this be our feeling and supplication, that this perfect form of prayer may become more blessed in our eyes, and purifying to our souls.

“*Our* Father” — not *my* Father. Thus are we taught to go out of ourselves—to feel for, and to pray for, all mankind; but “especially for them who are of the household of faith¹.” Observe also, the encouraging title by which our Saviour calls upon us to address God, “Father:” a title, which, softening all impressions of his greatness, his justice, and his wisdom, brings us before His footstool, touched with this feeling, that “like as a father pitieth” his own children, even so, is the Lord merciful unto them that fear Him².

His children we are, not only as He hath created us—not only as He hath preserved us (for what is preservation, but a continuous act of creative power) but we are his children, inasmuch as He hath *adopted* us, out of the ruined family of Adam, into the redeemed family of Christ, his Son. Received into this holy society, at our Baptism, we learn to “cry Abba, Father.”

¹ Gal. vi. 10.

² Ps. ciii. 13.

We are enlightened by His Spirit; nourished by His Sacrament; taught by His Word. The faithful, who "receive not His Grace in vain¹," are brought up, by the power and love of the Comforter; and are prepared, by his renewing influences, for the kingdom of Glory. But, lest this endearing term should tempt us to become familiar in our approaches to God, a gracious restraint is laid upon our minds, by the remainder of the Invocation. "Our Father—which art in HEAVEN!" "Heaven is His Throne. The earth His footstool." As the light of the sun pierces into every corner, so does the eternal Eye search every place, and judge the very secrets of the heart. It watches over the traveller on his way, by land and by water; and shines with beaming love on the family at home. God, though He sitteth above in the Heavens, is about our path, and about our "bed, and spieth out all our ways³."

¹ Rom. viii. 15.² 2 Cor. i.³ Is. lxvi. 1.

The weakness of some, the low estate of others, does not render them beneath His notice. Let then, our light so “shine before men, that seeing our good works,” (wrought by the power of His indwelling Spirit,) they “may glorify our Father, which is in heaven ¹.”

“Hallowed, be Thy name.” That is, may thy name and all that belongeth unto our God, be kept holy. As the commandments, set before us, first our duty to God, and then our duty to man, so in the Lord's prayer, we are taught to make the glory and honour of God, our chief consideration. How can this be uttered by him, who gives way to cursing and swearing! or by him, who founds his jests upon some foolishly mis-applied text of holy Scripture! Or by him who joins in the profane laugh, instead of rebuking the scorner, or giving a chill, by offended seriousness. How painful, to

¹ Matt. v. 16.

hear persons (from habit, scarcely aware of what they are saying) taking the Lord's name in vain, when any thing either gives pleasure or creates surprise ! Can a man be desiring, in earnest, that God's name and majesty may be honoured, who refuses, as if it were unmanly, to *kneel upon his knees* (as the Patriarchs, Apostles, and Jesus Christ himself did) when daring to speak to the King of Glory on His throne ? Can he know the meaning of what he utters, who expresses the desire in prayer, "Hallowed be thy name," and in *practice* breaks the *Sabbath* ? — the most powerful means ordained by God, for keeping His name Holy.

"Thy kingdom come." Here we pray that the Lord Jesus may return, to set up His kingdom of Glory. And in this petition is included, that every part of the world may become Christian. That our kings may be "nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers to the "Church¹ ;"

¹ Isaiah xlix. 23.

and "Christ crucified" the doctrine of her Pastors. We pray, that the "Angel may fly abroad with the everlasting Gospel¹," and that the veil may be withdrawn from the mind of Israel. We pray, that all hardness of heart may be taken away from Turks, Heretics, and Infidels²; and that they may be fetched home to the spiritual fold. In these words, we call upon God, to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, and of the world, and to establish more and more, the kingdom of grace, which is "within the heart." We beseech Him to set up, by His law written on our consciences, a power of *controul* in our souls, which shall make us act, so as to advance the Gospel; and hasten that blessed period, when, the kingdoms of the world, shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ³.

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in

¹ Rev. xiv. 6.

² Collect for Good Friday.

³ Rev. xi. 15.

heaven." Observe the boundless character of this petition. No narrow desire is expressed only for the welfare of the society or country to which we belong — but for the increase of holiness in all the world. And fail not to remark the high standard of goodness raised before us. We are taught to beg of God — that we may imitate the Angels of Heaven in their obedience; that if we cannot love and serve Him *as much*, as they rejoice in doing, we may love and serve Him in the same way: if not in the same *degree*, at least in a similar *spirit*. O! that we took a higher standard for Christian obedience! that we would strive to meet the Lord's will, with the same *joy* and *readiness* that Angels manifest, instead of considering, as many do, the laws of Christ to be the burden of the Gospel. We should also pray to emulate the Angelic host in their *consistency* of obedience, instead of being different characters at different times. We should pray to be like them, in the

entireness of obedience, not merely minding duties, which fall in with our natural disposition, while we disregard those, which require the watchfulness and self-denial of the Christian, the plucking out a right eye, and cutting off a right hand.

Under the will of God, is no less implied our submitting to His dispensations. Some are always for active manifestations of zeal in His service. But God teaches us, by His discipline, that we must suffer as well as act, bear trials as well as perform duties; that we must learn to bend our hopes and wishes to His allwise, and gracious appointments. “O my Father! not as I will, but as thou wilt¹,” was the language in prayer of the blessed Jesus, within a few hours of His undergoing the scourge and cross. “He suffered, leaving us an example¹,” with a warning that “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God².” “If we suffer with Him,

¹ Matt. xxvi. 39.

² 1 Pet. ii. 21.

we shall also reign with Him²." Only believe, that no trial comes upon us *without God's permission*, and that every Christian's trials are best suited to the correction of his *own* soul. They are sent perhaps to chastise—to check us—to purge from sin—to wean our hearts from a world, where we are not to tarry long; a world whose gods are pleasure, honour, and wealth; whose business is all toil, and whose judgment is the fire of the Great Day.

If we thus made prayer the rule of life, we should receive grace, to worship, and serve, and obey God as we ought to do.—We should "take up our cross daily³," and follow the Lord Jesus, without murmuring at our lot, or disputing His will. And, if we now resolve to be *His* in this spirit, the angels, who rejoice, when one sinner is turned to God—the angels, who watch the conflicts of the stedfast Christian with interest, will soon congratulate our

¹ Acts xiv. 22.

² 2 Tim. ii. 12.

³ Mark viii. 34.

victory," when we are landed on the shores of the eternal world.

II. Here ends the first division of this sublime prayer of Christ. Having been now taught by Him, to desire, in the first place, the keeping holy of God's *name*; the coming of His Son's *kingdom* in spirit, in truth, and in glory; and the doing and bearing God's *will*, according to the mind of His heavenly subjects, we are now permitted to bring our own needs before His throne. "Seek ye *first*, said our Saviour, the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and *all* these things shall be added unto you ¹." Under the *second* class of petitions are those, in which we beseech God to send us all things that be needful, both for our souls and bodies; and that He will be merciful unto us, and forgive us our sins; and that it will please Him to save and defend us in all dangers, ghostly and bodily;

¹ Matt. vi. 33.

and that He will keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from the great enemy of our souls, and from everlasting death."

Under the words, "Give us this day our daily bread," how much are we taught! Give, not *me*, but *us*, day by day, such a supply of our necessities, as thou seest good for us—food, clothing, shelter, health, senses, and safety—is the meaning of the prayer. And are we not reminded in this very exercise of brotherly *love*, and of our *dependence* upon God, that we do not obtain any thing, strictly speaking, of ourselves, but that He is the giver of all good. The hand of the labourer may be suddenly stricken by palsy in this uncertain life; the professional man may, by loss of reason, be deprived of his usual mode of getting his bread; a sudden letter may inform the votary of commerce, that his wealth has vanished, and his family been reduced to beggary;—*God alone is a safe stay*, in this vale of tears.

As we are taught to pray *daily* for our

bread, we learn a lesson, at once, of devotion, trust, and contentment. "Give me neither riches, nor poverty. Feed me with food convenient for me¹." This prayer, piously used, will drive away all anxiety. Having, by prayer, put our request into the hands of God; by faith, we must leave it there. "Put thou thy *trust* in the Lord, and be doing good²." Having prepared the land with diligence, the husbandman waits for the former and the latter rain. Without this gift, his labour is lost; and without his labour, the fruitful seasons would only bring up thorns and briars. We must learn, to commit the morrow's *cares* to the Lord. To day has its duties, and temptations, to watch over; yea, and its blessings, to call for gratitude. He that, without our deserving, provides for to-day, will also provide for to-morrow. He that feedeth the fowls of the air, and painteth every flower of the field, will not overlook

¹ Prov. xxx. 8.

² Psalm xxxvii. 3.

the members of Christ. If we feed on the *living bread* that came down from heaven, we shall never lack *that* bread, and those earthly supports, of which our Heavenly Father knoweth that we stand in need.

“And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.” This supplication we cannot pour forth too fervently, for on this, depends our blessing here, our salvation hereafter. If any of us be not in a *forgiven state*; if, against any one of us, the charge of *unremitted* sin is lying, who shall describe the danger of such an one? Are we aware, that we *all*, in various degrees, require a pardon from God? Can any one be bold enough to maintain before the Judge, that he has done *one* action, in his life, free from imperfection? Was any prayer ever offered up, without some wandering thought? If our best services need mercy to be extended to them, how greatly must our presumptuous sins, our neglect, and ignorances, need the cleansing merits of Christ's sacrifice on the cross,

to screen the offender from punishment, and to purify his conscience from guilt? How wretched our lot is under our *fallen* condition, compared with what we might have been, had our first parents not yielded in the fatal hour of temptation! Born in purity—our lives spent innocently, we should have passed, perhaps, like Enoch and Elijah, to some higher abode of bliss—without the mournful solemnities of the closing eyelid, the coffin, and the grave. But, coming into the world, as we now do, *inclined* in heart to evil, and refusing the good; tempted by Satan, and urged on by evil example; we find, in surveying our hearts and ways, that we have *no spotless* offerings to present; that we cannot escape the sentence of justice, unless, as penitent believers, we find a *refuge* in the loving mercy of the Redeemer. “Lord, save us, we perish,” must be the cry, sooner or later, of every one. Happy, if the conviction be wrought, ere the hour of probation pass away; happy, if in this life a *true faith*

leads the soul to Jesus as the “author and finisher of salvation.” Happy he, who is enabled to enjoy a good hope, because “of God’s word, that though his sins have been as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow, though they be like crimson, they shall be white as wool¹.” Yea, that great as they may have been, “they never shall be mentioned unto him².”

But as a chief token, amongst other satisfactory proofs of a true faith, must be found, a *readiness to forgive* men their trespasses against us. And, indeed, if we retain malice against any, we turn this heavenly prayer into a curse upon ourselves—“Forgive us, AS we forgive them that trespass against us,” &c. If, then, we refuse to forgive—we do as much as say, “Reject my prayers, O God, to be reconciled unto Thee! show no pity upon me. Treat *me*, O Lord, as I treat man. Remember all my wrongs: be extreme to mark what I have done amiss.”

¹ Is. i. 18.

² Ez. xxxiii. 16.

If this be dreadful to think of, not much less so is that fearful threat we sometimes hear: I will forgive, but I cannot *forget*; that is, I do not *from my heart* forgive. Art thou willing that God should thus deal with thee? Such is thy prayer to Him. Be not rash with thy mouth, before God. If the injury be deep, is it of so heinous a cast, as the offence of those who crucified the Lord of life? His prayer was, "Forgive them." Shall thine be, "Destroy these mine enemies?" Think what trifles, the most deadly injuries will seem, when we are going out of this world: and be ready to "forgive, as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us¹."

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." That is, according to the power of the sacred language, "suffer us not to be led into trials *above* what we are able to bear, but with the temptation, make a way for us to escape²." We pray that should the Lord

¹ Eph. iv. 32.

² 1 Cor. x. 13.

prove us, as He did Abraham of old, we may give up every thing for God. Should He seem *slow* to hear, as in the case of the woman of Canaan, we desire that we may tarry the Lord's leisure. Every one has some sins that do most easily beset him. He must peculiarly watch against these. He must make a practice of self-examination. He must strive more stedfastly against the next assault. The heart must be guarded; and the frequent ejaculation (known only to God) must ascend, "Deliver me from evil on this occasion." If Christ was tempted, Satan will not let us escape. Christ was "led by the Spirit," and had recourse to the word of God, "It is written ¹." And behold, the devil leaveth him ! By permitted temptation, we learn to know ourselves, to trim our lamps, and to lean on Divine strength; and if God's Spirit be importuned to help our necessities, we shall be delivered from evil—the

¹ Matt. iv.

evil of corruption, and the evil of guilt; and finally, from the evil of everlasting fire, through Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins "in His own blood ¹."

III. And now, having learned from our Divine Master to love God as our Father, and to honour His name, promote His kingdom, and obey His will, in the spirit of an angel; and having been further sanctioned in petitioning for the supply of our earthly wants, the pardon of our past sins, and deliverance from the power of new temptations, what more is left us to *ask*? But, there is left us, the divine task of praise—even of ascribing all glory to Him, under whose blessed kingdom we live and move and have our being; to Him, who hath all power in Heaven, and in earth. How can our faith fail, when "the King eternal, immortal, invisible," hath taken us into relation with Himself, and declared it "his

¹ Rev. i. 5.

good pleasure to give us the kingdom." Strive we then more and more, when on our knees, to affix a *definite* force, and intention, to every separate petition in the Lord's Prayer. Let us take care to pray it over *very slowly*, in our *private devotions*, and to *dwell* upon every portion of its unbounded meaning. To *begin* our devotions sometimes with the Lord's Prayer, is a discreet practice, tending to correct indevout habits of mind. To meditate on some clause, in the course of the day, is a pious and useful exercise of the soul. Remember, above all, that no prayer will be fervent, into which the inspiration of the Holy Spirit doth not breathe life; and that no offerings will be accepted above, save those which are rendered in the name of that great High Priest, who "ever liveth to make intercession for us¹."

¹ Heb. vii. 25.

SERMON IX.

SOLEMNIZATION OF MATRIMONY.

EPHESIANS v. 24, 25.

“AS THE CHURCH IS SUBJECT UNTO CHRIST, SO LET THE WIVES BE SUBJECT TO THEIR OWN HUSBANDS IN EVERY THING : HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES, EVEN AS CHRIST ALSO LOVED THE CHURCH, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR IT.”—

THE next service in course, is that, for the solemnization of Matrimony. Need I remind you, that our first parents were joined in marriage by God himself: yea, “*God blessed them*”¹. “Marriage was ordained by God; instituted in Paradise; and the first blessing from the Lord. He gave man, not a friend, but a wife; that is, a

¹ Gen. v. 2.

friend *and* a wife too." "Marriage is the seminary of the Church. It was ministered unto by angels, and is a school and exercise of virtue; and though marriage hath cares, yet the single life hath desires which are more troublesome and more dangerous. Here is the proper scene for piety, and patience, of the duty of parents, and the charity of relatives. Here kindness is spread abroad, and love is united and made firm as a centre. Marriage is the nursery of heaven. The virgin sends prayers to God, but she carries but one soul to Him. Marriage is fuller of sorrows, and fuller of joys. Celibate, like the fly in the heart of the apple, dwells in a perpetual sweetness; but sits alone, and is confined, and dies in singularity: But, marriage, like the useful bee, builds a house, and gathers sweetness from every flower; and unites into societies, and keeps order, and feeds the world with delicacies, and promotes the interest of mankind. Single life makes men, in *one* instance, to be like angels; but marriage,

in very many respects, makes the chaste pair to be like to Christ ¹."

It was the custom of the Primitive Church to require of those, who were desirous of entering into this covenant of love, to give notice beforehand in the presence of the congregation. By this observance, indiscreet marriages were prevented, and an interest was created among Christians, in behalf of their brethren, as members of Christ's family upon earth. Hence, arose the practice of publishing *banns*, an old word, signifying notice or proclamation. And the precautionary steps thus taken by the Church, have been often blessed, no doubt, in preventing *new* bonds of union, while both parties previously married were living; or checking marriage, where either close relationship existed, or, where the youth of the applicants creating a difficulty, the parents or guardians may have seen cause to withhold their consent. This service may not be solemnized, *at*

¹ Bishop Jeremy Taylor. Serm.—Marriage Ring.

present, in any place but the Church : except on those special occasions, for meeting which, the chief minister of our Church is pleased to grant a dispensation. The persons concerned, having duly presented themselves, at some reasonable hour fixed on, before noon, the service commences with the minister, from the altar, exhorting the congregation then assembled, to consider the sanctity of this rite, its divine origin, its sublime signification. He declares it, on the authority of St. Paul, to be “honourable among all men¹ :” to have been instituted, not in our present degraded condition, but, while man was yet innocent in paradise. It is described according to Scripture, as setting forth the mystical union between Christ and His Church². Can we hear these things, and not deeply ponder on the solemnity of the nuptial bond? Can we recollect, that the ever blessed Saviour adorned and beautified

¹ Heb. xiii. 4.

² Eph. v. 32.

this holy estate, by His hallowing presence, and by the performance of His *first* miracle in Cana of Galilee¹, and not marvel, that man or woman can approach that altar, at such a moment in life, and be found in a light, irreverent frame of mind? The congregation is admonished, of the blessing of children; who, being born in wedlock, are brought up in the nurture of the Lord. They are reminded of the tendency of this divine ordinance to bring the heart under pure and sanctified controul; and lastly, of its being ordained for the mutual society, comfort, and help, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity. Lest any impediment, hitherto concealed, may have been found to arise, any person is even then at liberty to come forth, and state the same: the parties, themselves, are adjured, by all the terrors of the judgment day; by all the dreadful disclosures then

¹ John ii. 1.

coming to light—now to confess, ere it be too late, any obstacle or just hindrance : and they are most solemnly assured, that in neglect of this necessary acknowledgment, their marriage is neither ratified in heaven, nor lawful upon earth.

In that simple and most affecting relation of sacred history¹, wherein Eliezer, the faithful steward of Abraham, is dispatched to Mesopotamia, to fetch thence a wife for him, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, the consent of the damsel was asked, before that her parents sanctioned her union with the patriarch Isaac. And in beautiful, and touching imitation of this gracious concurrence, the sincere declaration is required from each, that there is a willing heart, from this day forward, to accept the other, according to God's holy ordinance ; and in tenderness of spirit to honour, and to cherish, and to love, with a faithfulness that shutteth out every other

¹ Gen. xxiv.

object, so long as they both shall live. This declaration being given to the minister, in the hearing of those present, the covenant is made, and thus formally entered on. The daughter, now parting from the home of her childhood, and the dear and natural guardians of her youth, is content to trust herself to the husband of her choice. And while the plighted vow, which is heard in heaven, engages on his part, that he will, from this day forth—for better—for worse—for richer—for poorer—in sickness and in health—love and cherish his betrothed to the hour of death; the voice of the bride is heard, with equal tenderness, and with more humility, binding herself to serve and obey, till death do divide them. How wise, in our Church, to mingle thoughts of *eternity* with this festival in man's life! For the bridal lamp hath been changed, by some awful visitations, for the funereal torch. And must we not remember instances of those, who seemed to be entering almost on a new existence of conse-

crated friendship and mutual devotedness, suddenly ! O, how suddenly ! separated by the hand of death ?

It is hard to repress indignation, at the ill-placed mirth which betrays itself in coarse and trifling minds, at that part of the answer, wherein obedience is promised. If *seriously* considered, what is it, but the sad remembrancer of that fatal transgression, which drove us from the presence of the eternal Father, covered our souls with defilement, and overwhelmed us with a curse from heaven ? And had it not been for the compassion, the humiliation, and the propitiating death of the Saviour, would have overthrown the hopes of the world, for evermore ! What is the nature of that obedience exacted ? The dominion of the man over the woman, is like the rule exercised by the soul over the body. Man and wife shine together, like the sun and the moon, in their proper spheres of domestic government¹. If more *reverence* be

¹ Vide Bp. Jeremy Taylor. Serm. 18.

due from her to him as the head—more honour is, or should be rendered in return from him to her, as unto the weaker vessel. There should be no bitterness on his part, in upholding the rank, entrusted to him by God ; nor any backwardness on her part, to yield in such sort, as shall manifest “*the meekness of a godly matron.*”

One of the early Fathers¹ in the Church mentions the use of the Ring in Christian espousals—a chaste and beautiful emblem of that form wherein no *end* can be found. And fanciful indeed must be the scruple, which rejects so artless and expressive a pledge of Christian attachment. With this, the holy compact is now concluded, and the bridegroom directing his speech to his affianced bride, avows that from this hour he admits her to a full participation of all that is his due, in person—in station—and in property—in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Covenants, before our

¹ Clem : Al. A.D. 190.

Saviour's time, were ever ratified by blood. They were expressive of this meaning—that he, who brake that covenant, deserved *his* blood to be spilt. But under the Gospel, in lowly distrust of our own strength, we perfect our covenant, with prayer for Divine support: and the Most High is implored to bestow His blessing,—to the end, that the contracting parties may, like Isaac and Rebekah, dwell together faithfully, and ever remain in love and in peace, through Jesus Christ. This prayer ended, their hands are joined by the minister; who proclaims before the Lord, in His sanctuary, “Those whom *God* hath joined together, let no man put asunder.” And having called on those present to bear witness to the solemn scene, it is his office to pronounce, with the voice of authority, that they be man and wife. And it is his joy and his privilege, thus to intercede for them: “God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you! The Lord mercifully with His

favour look on you ; and so fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace, that ye may so live together in this life, that in the world to come, ye may have life everlasting.”

The hymn of grateful praise next ascends ; and is followed by the prayer taught us by the Lord to be used when we pray. And to those, who are vitally united to Christ, and continue living members of His spiritual household, how deeply impressive is *that* prayer, when they now use it with reference to this *new* relation in life : desiring that to them, His name, His kingdom, and His will, may be dear : that their daily needs may be supplied ; their sins be forgiven ; their souls kept from temptation, by His power and to His glory.

But before they depart, yet once again, is specific prayer offered up for a blessing on their progeny, and that the seed of life may be sown in their hearts ; and that like Abraham, ever enjoying God's blessing and obeying His will, they may, to their great comfort, be in safety under His pro-

tection, and abide in the love of God. Every grace is desired for them in their household, governed in a Christian and virtuous method. And lastly, in rehearsing the inseparable character of holy wedlock, the Lord is importuned, by all the mystical association of Christ with His Church, to promote true love between them, to pour upon them the riches of His grace, and to sanctify them, so that they may ever please Him both in body and soul. And, to show *how highly* the Church estimates the benefits of the Lord's supper—they are directed, after listening to an address compiled from Holy Scripture, to partake of that restoring feast, at the time of their marriage, if there be a Sacrament; or, on the first opportunity afforded afterwards.

It has been intimated by some, that this service of our Church belongs, in parts, to an age less refined, than the one in which we live. Would it not be more correct

to state, that the age, in which we live, has receded in genuine simplicity of mind ? There are those, indeed, who object to it, because a blessing is pronounced in the name of the Son, and the Spirit, no less than in that of the Father. Such would find fault with those words of the Saviour, whereby the influences of Baptism are announced ; and deny their union with the Lord Jesus and the Comforter, in that holy sacrament. There are others, who object to the word “ worship,” as applied by man to a fellow-creature. Do they know so little of their own language, as not to be aware that *worship*, in olden English, means the same as *honour* ? “ Them that worship me, I will worship ¹,” was the translation of that passage, which now stands thus, “ Them that honour me, I will honour.” Yet no one ever imagined that God was represented as paying adoration to His creatures.

In the changes which are proposed to be

¹ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

made in the law with regard to the administration of this service, as well as of Baptism, there is nothing to affect the members of the Church of England. Your children may be baptized, precisely as you were ; and marriage may be solemnized as it has been hitherto, in your days and in those of your parents. By the usual notice of Banns, or of Licence, you may come to your parish Church as heretofore, and invoke the blessing of God on yourselves, just as it hath been ever the custom of the Church in times past.

True it is, that a change in the Law is likely to take place, granting indulgence to those who belong not to the Church. And parties are at liberty to call upon the ministers and teachers of dissenting congregations, to marry them. That this permission may lead to evil consequences, cannot but be apprehended by the pious dissenter himself. But a greater evil is before us. Two persons will, if the law be put in force, be able to go before an officer in parochial authority—a LAYMAN ; and make

a civil contract of marriage, with as little reference to GOD, as a man employs on buying an estate. And perhaps, there may be found *men* bold enough, light enough, to take advantage of this permission : which God, of His mercy, grant may yet be kept far from the laws of a country, professing to uphold and honour the Christian religion. For if *sacred laws* have been found insufficient to secure the vows of fidelity—how shall *promises before man*, avail? But will *women* be found so shameless as to use this liberty? Will an *Englishwoman* discard the thought of God, at a moment, when such new and important duties are about to devolve upon her? when (according to Scripture) she is about to assume that position in life, which the Church holds spiritually in connection with Christ. Let not the bitter remembrance be allowed to haunt you, as the fearful pangs of travail in birth are approaching, that *God*, who alone can then help you, was set at nought on your entrance into

the married state. When you are sorrowing over a child in danger ; over a husband, whose life is despaired of, have it not *then* to charge upon yourself, that it is a babe, in whose behalf, *God* was not sought after ! a husband, to whom you were not joined *before God* !

Come to your parish Church, as heretofore, and seriously pray God to sanctify to you this great change in life ; to give you strength for all its arduous duties. Come in a religious spirit. Be joyful ; but, as before the Lord. Serve the Lord, on this and every occasion, with gladness of heart.

Painful it is at all times to take up the language of *complaint* : *that* of *rebuke* still more. But, when I consider the spirit, which our service enforces, of advisedness, seriousness, sobriety, and the fear of God, in which holy marriage *ought* to be entered upon ; and reflect upon the hasty, ill-judged, ill-assorted unions which are formed for life, can we, when on such a subject, dare to hold our peace ? Is it not true then,

that very many are associated in marriage from sudden fancy—mere personal admiration—from the attraction of rank—the convenience of an establishment—*supposed* freedom from restraint—some from the love of money—others from the love of pleasure?

Will serious Christians believe, that amongst those joined in wedlock, some are found to come to the altar *from the tavern*, and thither to return again?

There is indeed also to be witnessed at some seasons, so much indifference—trifling—visible sin and irreverence—as renders this service, occasionally, the most painful which ministers have to celebrate. Believe me, that these things are now adverted to with unfeigned reluctance. But if *we* neglect to warn, we make ourselves partakers of other men's sins.

Let me now however contemplate a marriage undertaken in the spirit of genuine piety. I will suppose, that prayer having been unfeignedly made for guidance in so

momentous an undertaking, and *that* prayer having been graciously heard and answered, the vows are plighted in the name of the ever-blessed Trinity; and the comfort and strength of the Spirit sought from God, in the name of Jesus. Be prepared for imperfection in each other. We are *all* by nature, corrupt: and however contrary to the flights of false imagination, you must expect to see the remains of sin in fallen children of Adam. But ye should pray for and with each other. Ye should meditate on the word of God together. Your family, small as it may be, should bend the knee together, at morning and evening, before the Lord. Together, should you seek the sanctuary of God; and together, at the earliest opportunity, and *for ever afterwards*, strengthen and refresh your souls by the body and blood of Christ. Ye must not hope to find perfection, but infirmity—and ye must pray and strive that your hearts may be knit together in Christ Jesus; and that ye may be mutually a

comfort, guidance, and support unto each other's souls. True happiness does not necessarily consist in a strict resemblance of character, but rather in that conciliatory adaptation of the one mind to the other, which shall strengthen and purify both.

Where two persons are living constantly together, it must be that there will arise, at times, a contrariety of opinion. But the meek *forbearance* of the Gospel—that rich gift of the Spirit—duly prayed for, will fully meet all these momentary chances of interruption: and a due vigilance will guard against their recurrence. At all times in the married life, but especially in the *first* years, let every cause of offence be avoided. When mind is more acquainted with mind, there will be less liability to disturbance of harmony. A due delicacy should always be preserved, lest opinions should jar; and lest any unkindness be used in maintaining them, which may endanger domestic peace. To this end, little things should be, in a moment, stifled. If

any string should have given harsh music, forget the unpleasing sound at once, in the full melody of all that yet remains around to be enjoyed. Dwell not on the momentary discord. Cast it from the mind, and cease to recall the disturbing note.

If, on perception of each other's character, some subjects be found distasteful, let these ever be scrupulously avoided. Let *each* uphold the honour due to the other, both before strangers and servants, and when alone. No distinction of mine and thine must be heard, where two have been pronounced, by God, to be one. Man and wife should be the pleasantest companions to each other. Some, who can be agreeable in society, are in their family circle often ungracious. They should be able to enjoy an evening spent with each other in their home, above all that gaiety abroad, and society elsewhere, can afford. But it is owing to this want of cultivation of a domestic and conjugal spirit, that the club room, the dinner party, the gaming table,

the theatre, are preferred to *home* ! Home—where is the calm and unconstrained flow of conversation—just as one likes to speak, or to listen, to *one*, whose heart responds to every movement within. Yet, sometimes does it happen, on the other hand, that the husband, tired with his daily toil, would find enjoyment in his own chair, instead of seeking excitement abroad—but, that his quiet is broken in upon by needless company ; or he is annoyed with the detail of family grievances, or distressed by the overflowings of an angry spirit. Make thy husband's home happy to him, thou that wouldest see him spend his evenings at home ! Waste not his earnings in vain extravagance ! Check not his industry, by want of economy : and by thine own diligence and frugality, go hand in hand with him ; that his home be cheering on his return from mental or bodily labour ; and refreshing with the associations of piety, peace, and affection.

Lastly, let this charge be engraven on our minds, that marriage must be *in the Lord*. In that beautiful address, which closes the service, on what high ground is every duty placed ! In the *love* that Christ beareth to His Church, are we not reminded of our dependence on *Him*, to make our peace with God, to purify our hearts, to intercede in heaven for us, to admit us into glory hereafter ? Thus, let the husband give up himself, in everything, for his wife ; let him labour that by his prayers, his example, his gentle admonition, he may, through the Holy Spirit, present her, when the bridegroom cometh, acceptable in Christ Jesus, without spot and blemish. Let him love her, even as himself, as being heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered. And let the wife endeavour in spirit, looking to Christ as the Head, that she may be made an instrument in the Divine hand to win her husband from every evil doing ;

and by her chaste conversation, and Christian persuasion, bring his mind nearer unto the image of God.

Thus, judging ourselves by Scripture tests—those, who pride themselves on their domestic virtues, *will find enough to humble them*. They who have been false, and harsh, and distant, and neglectful, may find the safe way of return to the vows that be upon them. And may I advise, that on the anniversary of that day which bound the Christian husband and wife as friends before God—this service of our Common Prayer be always meditated on, for humbling and rectifying us in our course.

The Saviour hath deigned to liken Himself to the spiritual bridegroom ; and the Church is designated as the bride. And they that have been justified by the blood of Jesus, and renewed by His Spirit, may surely indulge the *hope* of dwelling together for ever hereafter. Though the relation be changed, to suit the difference of glori-

fied beings—yet, shall not the friendship be perfected in *His* presence, who liveth with the Father and the Spirit, one God? And in the eternal temple may they not expect to worship, and take sweet counsel together, and walk in the house of God, as friends?

SERMON X.

VISITATION OF THE SICK.

JAMES V. 14, 15.

“IS ANY SICK AMONG YOU? LET HIM CALL FOR THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCH; AND LET THEM PRAY OVER HIM, ANOINTING HIM WITH OIL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD: AND THE PRAYER OF FAITH SHALL SAVE THE SICK, AND THE LORD SHALL RAISE HIM UP; AND IF HE HAVE COMMITTED SINS, THEY SHALL BE FORGIVEN HIM.”

LET no one be so uncharitable, as to charge us, when engaged in a course of Lectures of this nature, with preaching the Prayer Book, and not the Bible. What is the Common Prayer—but the doctrine, experience, and precepts of Holy Scripture, applied to the heart devotionally? With the help of God, we shall, I trust, be enabled to give heed to that weighty charge of St. Paul

—“Necessity is laid upon me: yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel ¹.”

The Church, you will have observed, does not provide offices only for those more solemn occasions in the Christian life, when we partake of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Supper of the Lord. The Church takes thought for the young, and provides a Catechism ². The Church blesses her children joined in holy marriage. The Church considers her members, cut off by *sickness* from the great congregation; and has provided a form for ministering to the sick; such as greatly tends to edify all, who are thus chastened of God. The dangers and casualties of life are so numerous; sickness comes upon us, in so many forms, that we cannot regard the subject in too serious a point of view. The sick chamber, instead of being

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 16.

² Lectures on the Catechism were delivered before the congregation in Lent, 1836, a portion of which is introduced into the present course.

a scene of repining, at interruption of business, or disturbance of pleasure, should be devoutly endured, nay, by the heavenly mind rejoiced in, as a Remembrancer of our fallen condition ; and as affording sanctified preparation, by exercises of self-enquiry and faith, and penitence, for removal to a world of holiness.

The Visitation Service commences with that Gospel sound—"Peace." The messenger of peace, on his entrance into the abode of sorrow, is directed to bless, in the name of his Lord, all that are therein ; and to pray the God of mercy, that he would remember the precious blood of Jesus, which has been shed, and turn away His wrath from our iniquities. Then in the words of our Lord, summing up all that can be desired for soul and body, he prays, not for those present only, but for the whole of Christ's Church. One of the great beauties of our occasional services is, that they seem to draw the soul of the *individual* into personal communion with God. In our weakness, we are often tempted to imagine ourselves lost in

the throng of worshippers ; overlooked in the crowd of creatures and multitude of worlds. But, as in Baptism, the Church pronounced, as the handmaid of the Lord, I baptize *thee* ; as in the Lord's Supper, the body and blood of Christ given for *thee* ; so also, in this service, her minister intercedes specifically, for the afflicted person—that he may be saved and defended, and may receive help from God's holy place ; that the enemy may have no advantage against him ; and that the Lord may be a tower of defence. And as St. Paul doth oft times take for granted, that his hearers already possess the grace, which he wishes to inculcate, so, in all tender charity, the Church presumes, unless an impenitent, a careless, or hypocritical state be discerned, that the sick man has, according to his profession, at such a time, that *trust* in the Lord, without which, in some degree, it is impossible to please God.

Next, is the Lord importuned to look down from heaven, and to inspire the soul with comfort and sure confidence

in His goodness; to keep him in safety; to sanctify this fatherly correction—to the end, that his *faith* may be made stronger, and his *repentance* more serious: and, that either his life, being restored, may be passed to the glory of God; or, if ended through this visitation, he may dwell in the everlasting life, provided through the Son of God.

The Church is blamed by some (who would be better employed in learning than in blaming) for treating her members as in a covenanted state. Unless it be an instance, of a sinner, who rejects the faith of Christ, and lives in defiance of God's laws; or, a case of the merely moral man, or the worldling, or the formalist, are we not bound so to treat them? Is not this the language of St. Paul to the Churches, unto which he writes? Does not our Lord remind the Jews of His day, as the covenanted people, of their privileges *as such*,—of their being the children of the kingdom?—of good and evil ones being in His Church, in the Parable of the Net; and

of the Tares?—and are we not bound in charity to hope, that even at the eleventh hour, the germ of communicated grace given in Baptism, (though it may not yet have sprung into active operation,) by the awakening Spirit, shall become a principle of life? It may lie, like the seed, which after the lapse of an hundred years, is capable, when at length the obstruction is removed, of feeling from the light and genial warmth of heaven, a quickening influence. Hence, the cheering expressions in this service; and how invitingly must they fall on *his* ear, who thinks that he hath but a short time to live! How sweet the words referring to himself, in direct prayer to God—“*thy servant*, visited with sickness—this sick member of the Church.” Can we dare, when they, whom we visit, profess their faith in the Father, the Saviour, and the Comforter; when they, often with tears of agony, bewail their past offences; can *we* dare to say—You have no hope; you are not converted? Nay, rather, at such an hour, let us, indeed, while trying the spirits, whe-

ther they be of God, put on, as the elect of God, bowels of compassion. When we come in contact with a mind, which, however feebly, is striving, in Christ, to prepare for the awful journey, let us be ready to invite, to direct, to hold out every just hope; and, while we would not *deceive*, tremble lest we *discourage*.

Having endeavoured to guard and justify these expressions of soothing influence used by the Church, I proceed to notice the wise and affectionate address, which the minister now makes to the sick person. Commencing with words of endearing invitation, he reminds him, that according to the dealing of the Almighty in His providence, this sickness is from God. He suggests, whether it be sent to correct some sin; or to try the patience of the sufferer, so as to manifest God's grace, and increase his own happiness hereby. But from whatever cause it may arise, he assures him, that, if he does *now* truly humble himself for sin, and fix his trust in Jesus, as a Saviour,

and be not only submissive, but thankful to God—this very sickness shall help forward the soul in the right way that leadeth unto life.

Here a pause ensues, lest the mind of the sick person be wearied. And sure I am, that enough has already been expressed in the service, to draw the soul which has hitherto resisted, unto God, if grace be now sought after in earnest; and to quicken the established servant of the Lord, in the divine life. But, if a willingness be shown for the minister to proceed, he renews his exhortation to his sick brother or sister, to take in good part, the chastisement, as from the Lord. Directed to that striking illustration of St. Paul, the mind is taught to feel, that the needful, but sometimes mistaken, correction of earthly parents, is not a mark of hatred, but of love. Much more should the probation of our Heavenly Father be looked upon, as a token that He is dealing with us, as with children. On the highest ground of Christian duty is

it represented, that we must be conformed, by sufferings of some kind, to the Saviour of the world. For is there not entire sympathy between the head and the members? Must not the one partake in the lot of the other? Did Christ pass his pilgrimage upon the earth, as a "man of sorrows," and shall we refuse to drink of His cup? Was not Christ crucified, before He went up into glory? and should not we also be ready to suffer here, with Christ, in order to find an entrance into eternal joy?

After that we have thus set before our sick friend, the purposes of God, His gracious promises, and appeals to the heart of man, the duty of *self-examination* is brought home to the soul, in a still closer enquiry, as to his *faith*, on all the vital truths of the Gospel. He is reminded of the account to be rendered unto God; and in consideration hereof, is urged to try his reins and his heart. He is exhorted to accuse and condemn himself *now*, that he may avoid the accusation and condemning sentence of

the most just Judge. If all that is revealed in Holy Scripture, thus summed up, be welcomed by him, as *truth*, whereon his soul is fed, he is then moved to deeper conviction of sinfulness before God. The question of forgiveness towards those who may have injured him, is set before his soul; and he is urged to examine whether his heart be truly in a state of charity towards all men. And he is most seriously exhorted to seek reconciliation, if he have done any wrong to any man; and to make reparation (as far as man hath it in his power, thus to undo the evil, which he may have committed). He is advised to settle all his worldly affairs; and if possessed of means, is exhorted, to bear in mind that "it is more blessed to give, than to receive¹;" and, to set apart some portion for the poor.

The Church of Rome has determined it *essential* to the obtaining forgiveness of sin, that confession be made to a Priest²;

¹ Acts xx. 35.

² Decree of Lateran Council, A.D. 1215. Vide Hooker, Keble's Ed. Vol. iii. pp. 18. 58.

and anointing with oil, sacramentally, is then supposed to qualify the departing spirit, for the journey, in peace. But, the Church, of which we are members, conceiving that miracles have ceased, discontinues the use of oil, originally enjoined as a sign of miracle—referring to life, not to death. In obedience to the customs of the Primitive Church, she invites a confession to the sympathizing ear of the minister, of such particular sins as may be still distressing to the conscience, and disquieting to the mind of the sufferer. And in such a case, if there be an earnest desire for assurance of pardon, the minister is authorized to absolve the penitent from guilt, in the name of our Lord Jesus, “who left power with his Church to remit the sins of all who truly repent and believe.” Is this too great an assumption? It might seem so; had not those words of Christ, addressed to men of like passions with ourselves, been recorded, as conveying, through them, perpetually, this power to His Church:

“Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained—and lo! I am with you, always, even unto the end of the world.” We gain nothing for the Church of Christ, by letting down the spiritual authority entrusted to her ministry. As surely as it belongs to our office, to open the door of the kingdom of heaven in baptism; and to admit, or repel, from the sacrament of peace and strength, so surely is it our high privilege to pronounce the moral leper spiritually clean, when the Lord hath wrought the work of deep contrition for sin, and steadfast reliance on the blood of the Lamb. “*And who is sufficient for these things* ¹?”

But mark the lowliness of spirit in our Church: instead of vaunting herself in the exercise of such judgment and pity, she instantly casts herself, in the person of her minister, to the ground; beseeches our most merciful God (as one, who, according to the multitude of His mercies, doth

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

so put away our sins, as to remember them no more) to open the eye of mercy upon the penitent, to renew what is decayed in his soul: to preserve him in the bosom of Christ's Church, to consider his sorrowful cries, to relieve his tears; and to impute not, any past sin, to one, whose full trust is in the divine mercy. And as the Church always supposes the penitent, going on to grace and holy obedience, the strength of the blessed Spirit is invoked, and prayer made, that when the Lord shall be pleased to remove him hence, he may be taken to the favour of God, not on the plea of his own merits, but, for the merits of Jesus Christ.

Then follows one of the songs of Zion: it is one of those peculiarly impressive Psalms, which deserves to be treasured up in the memory, so that we may cling to the comfort of it, in the hours of trial, sadness, and death. It is the 71st, and in the most ancient liturgies holds its place, in this office for attendance on the

sick. What words can be more touching, in addressing our covenant God! Incline thine ear unto me! be thou my strong hold; Thou art the thing that I long for, my hope even from my youth. Cast me not away, in the time of mine age. Forsake me not, when my strength faileth. Go not *far* from me, O God! my God, haste Thee to help me. O God! who is like unto Thee!"

Precious, is the name of Jesus, in the hour of health and strength. Precious, in the hour of rebuke and unkindness from a harsh world. Precious, in the time of affliction, bereavement, and inward conflict. But, how precious, when the thought is brought home—"I am never to leave this chamber again in the body." Then, to hear the prayer ascend from one of God's authorized servants: "O Saviour of the world, who by thy cross and precious blood, hast redeemed us—save us, and help us, we most humbly beseech thee!" Judge of the warm thrill of holy joy, which gushes from the

heart, at the prospect of being with *Him*, and seeing *Him* face to face, who hath wrought for us an eternal Redemption! How sustaining, meanwhile, is the blessing pronounced, "The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in Him, be now and evermore thy defence; and make thee know and feel, that there is none *other* name, under Heaven, given unto man, in whom, and through whom, thou mayest receive salvation, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then, taking his leave, Christ's minister thus commends the soul unto Divine care: "Unto God's gracious mercy, we commit thee. The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace, now and for evermore."

Is there little hope of recovery, when next the minister attends? The Church has provided him with prayers of heavenly consolation; with an approach to the

Father of all mercies ; the God of all comfort ; the only help in the time of need ; with petition, that as the outward man decayeth, the inner man may be strengthened with grace. . With desires for his having unfeigned repentance for all his errors, and stedfast faith in Jesus : and that, as his time of dissolution draweth nigh, his departure may be in peace, and in the favour of God ; and that his soul may be received through the merits of Christ. And, when at length, that hour is come, when the voice faileth, and the faint gaspings, and glassy fixedness of eye betoken the near separation between soul and body—to the Almighty God, even to Him, with whom do live the spirits of the just, after delivery from their earthly prisons, is commended the soul of our dear brother or sister, as *into the Hands* of a faithful Creator, and most merciful Saviour. “Wash it, we pray Thee” — thus ascends the prayer—“in the blood of that immaculate Lamb, that was slain to take away the sins

of the world ! and grant, that whatsoever defilements it may have contracted in this miserable world, being purged and done away, it may be presented unto Thee, pure and without spot." — Then, turning our thoughts into our own hearts, we entreat of God, that we, the survivors, seeing in these, and such like daily spectacles of mortality, how frail and uncertain our own condition is, may so number our days, that we may seriously apply our hearts to that heavenly wisdom, which may, in the end, bring us to everlasting life, through the merits of our only Saviour.

In that motherly thoughtfulness, which marks our Church, we find added, some prayers for *particular* cases. And of how tender and devout a character, those sorrowing parents will attest, who have heard such words as these, entrusted to the prevailing Intercessor above, in behalf of a *child*, drooping like a flower, daily, before their eyes. "The Almighty and *merciful* Father" is appealed to, as holding the issues

of life and death, to look with the eyes of mercy, upon their child lying on the bed of sickness; to relieve bodily pain, and to save the soul of the much beloved, for his mercies' sake. To the divine Ruler of appointed times, is it left, to prolong the days of life, and to make him either an instrument of God's glory, by doing good in his generation; or, to receive the dear one into those heavenly habitations, where, the souls of them that sleep in the Lord Jesus, enjoy perpetual rest and felicity.

One other prayer, to be used in the case of persons troubled in mind or conscience, most feelingly depicts the bitter things written against him; and leads the mind (when not too far unsettled) to seek patience and comfort in His tender mercy, who breaketh not the bruised reed, and doth not quench the smoking flax; and makes him hear of joy and gladness, and rejoice in the light of the Divine countenance, and peace in Jesus.

Having already fully discussed the na-

ture of the Holy Sacrament, I need not now enter particularly on the subject. As there is a service expressly provided by the Church, for the *Communion of the sick*, we would always encourage those, who have previously been partakers, to eat of that bread and drink of that cup. Nay more, we would try and prepare those for sharing in so great a privilege, who have hitherto, by neglect, or scruple, or other cause, been debarred this greatest of the means of grace. While we dread the delusion of those, who would receive it (if the term be not irreverent) as a passport to heaven, we would remind you, that to communicate in sickness, was the custom of the Primitive Church; and that they called the Sacrament thus administered—*Viaticum*—or food for the awful journey. If it be desirable for a person to receive *as often as may be*, while in health, it would appear, that a greater necessity existed for communion with Christ in the hour of sickness and approaching death.

And as Christ's presence is promised, where two or three are gathered together in His name, that presence may be rejoiced in, as surely, as where He was known by the disciples at Emmaus—two only with Himself—in breaking of bread. The service is almost the same as that used in the great congregation, except a short but expressive collect, wherein God is honoured, as correcting those whom He doth love, and chastising every one whom He doth receive: and He is entreated for grace in behalf of the sick; for patience, for recovery, (if agreeing with His blessed will) and for a spotless presentation of the soul unto God, whensoever the departure from the body shall take place. In the short extract from the Epistle to the Hebrews, the sick person is warned, in words of Scripture, not to despise the chastening of the Lord. And the Gospel gives that crowning assurance of heavenly mercy, that he, whose faith is fixed on God, as reconciled in Christ, “shall not come into

condemnation, but *is passed* from death unto life¹.”

I do earnestly beseech you, my brethren, to read over, devoutly, this very impressive service of our Church. You know that the hour is coming, when you will need all the support that can be rendered, to prepare you for passing into an unseen world, and for meeting your final sentence, to heaven or to hell. Blessed is the lot of those, who have time and due warning to trim their lamp, before the bridegroom cometh ! But the grace of God can, according to His sovereign disposal—fill the vessel of the faithful heart to the brim, with instantaneous communication of purifying and pardoning love, no less than He can prepare, by the ministration of a lingering sickness, for drawing the soul unto Himself. You will observe by the Rubric, that *notice* should be given to the minister of any person being sick ; and readily will

¹ John v. 24.

you understand, that in so thickly peopled a district as this, in which our lot is cast, unless we be invited, it is very difficult for us to attend in such cases. Nor can our visits be as frequent as we could wish them, from the number who need our ministration. Our poorer brethren, in this respect, have one of their compensations for wealth—in that their door is more open to us; and their heart more accessible to that *plainness* of dealing with the conscience, which, (unless we “set our faces as a flint,”) the capricious forms of higher society raise up and set a hedge before our eyes to obstruct.

The notion somehow prevails, that in the multitude of religious *books*, there is less cause for the attendance of a minister. These may do very well as enabling a sick person to profit by the ministerial services: but they are *no substitute* for his exhortations and intercession, who cometh in the name of Christ, his Master. “He that despiseth you, despiseth Me ¹,” said the Lord Jesus:

¹ Luke x. 16.

and in the words of my text, the Holy Ghost, the Giver of spiritual life, who best knoweth the mode of operating on the heart, hath *commanded*, "Is any sick, let him send for the elders of the Church." We sufficiently understand the shrinking of a delicate mind, and the nervousness of age, to make allowance for the hesitation, which dreads the admission of one, sometimes a stranger, into the privacy of the chamber of the sick. But the best cure for this scrupulousness, is to consider not the man, but his *office*. Regard us simply, as bearers of grace from your Saviour. Imagine not, that anything we can speak, can of *itself* do good, but only so far as accompanied by the blessing of the Holy Spirit. You can form no idea of the anxiety of mind which would overwhelm us, unless we thus *cast ourselves* on the corrective and sustaining grace of God. What, if we encourage, when we should awaken! What, if we alarm, when we should soothe! What, if we make the

heart of the righteous sad, whom the Lord hath not made sad! Is not this a duty that requires those rich gifts from heaven—wisdom, experience, aptness for teaching, zeal, caution, firmness, and tenderness, in no common measure imparted to us?

While we would not discourage the piety which is unwilling to give *but as a Christian*, joining words of advice and comfort in ministering to the sick and needy; while we gratefully acknowledge that *charitable* help afforded us, by discreet and condescending visits among the poor, we do most certainly deprecate any interference with the duties, strictly ministerial. Let not the office of the Priesthood be dispensed with; until it be found that a minister, having been sent for, *will not* attend. Sorry am I to state, that there are occasions in which the minister is called upon to visit under the plea of giving religious comfort, and the case made out as critical, so that, on an inclement evening, he is hurried to some distant habitation—on

reaching which, he finds, that alms, not spiritual advice, is that which is really desired. Or he is sometimes required, at an hour most unseasonable, to number some little one among the members of Christ's flock, whom neglectful parents have omitted to bring to the font, while health and life seemed secure.

Brethren, prepare *now*, by deep repentance and lively faith, for passing a holy and peaceful time on the bed of sickness. It is, as we well know, in many cases, a season of such excruciating pain and such distraction of mind, that to begin the work of grace on the heart, requires almost a miracle of Divine interposition. Neglect not your soul now, while grace is offered, lest, when that service is read, *which presupposes union with Christ*, you be compelled from conscience to cry out, "I am no servant of Christ. Lead me to Him, that I may for the *first* time, bend the knee of sincere sorrow, and be reconciled to my Lord." Be not offended, when we

strive to probe the conscience, to awaken conviction, to show your need of Christ, to strip the soul of all false pleas of merit, to present you to the Comforter for His healing gifts, and to Christ for covering you with the robe of His righteousness.

That eminent Christian, Hooker, was so far convinced of the Church being an instrument for giving to the lowly believer assurance of pardon, that he desired and received absolution from a brother minister. This humble man was not so mistaken in views of spirituality, as to imagine himself above the appointed means of grace; but received in his last sickness, "the blessed Sacrament of the body and blood of our Jesus." After which, says the devout writer of his life, his friend saw a reverend gaiety and joy in his face¹.—Pray that in the hour of sickness, *patience* of so high a character, may be vouchsafed unto us, that we may welcome the chastising hand of

¹ Iz. Walton.

the Lord, and say from the heart, "Though He slay me, I will trust in Him ¹." Pray that we may be in sickness *thankful* for the least office of kindness. If we cannot read *much*, may it be granted us, to enjoy *short* prayers, and extract nourishment from meditation on choice and comforting texts of Scripture. May we attain to an humble and reverent, more than rapturous frame of mind!—and if the prayer of faith *should* prevail, *through Him* who brought back three souls from the grave—*should* we be spared a little to recover our strength—may we live unto the Lord! *Should* we be once again raised up, let us be faithful in PAYING the *vows*, which we made when we were in trouble—and tell forth, in the short remnant of life, what God hath done for our souls.

¹ Job xiii. 15.

SERMON XI.

BURIAL SERVICE.

REVELATIONS xiv. 13.

“ I HEARD A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, SAYING UNTO ME. WRITE, BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD FROM HENCEFORTH : YEA, SAITH THE SPIRIT, FOR THEY REST FROM THEIR LABOURS ; AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM.”

FOR man, to be indifferent to that body, in which our first parent was created in the image of God ; in which the Son of God condescended to tabernacle, though without sin ; in which the Holy Ghost deigns to reside, as in a temple, when filling the heart of the Christian, would be base indeed, and an act little short of profaneness.

Hence, have arisen various modes of treating the body after death. The tender anxiety of Abraham to bury Sarah in the cave of Macpelah—the love of Jacob in erecting a pillar over the grave of Rachel—the charge of Joseph, when dying, to be carried up into the promised land, when the Lord should appear for His people—testify an early reverence for the fleshly cabinet of the immortal soul. The bodies of Enoch and Elijah, have passed away into the heavens without seeing corruption. Of Moses, it is carefully related, that his body could no where be found. But, “*The Lord buried him.*” Nor was there wanting a due reverence for the dead among the heathen. The Egyptians were wont to preserve the body by a curious process of embalming. The Greeks and Romans committed the earthly remains to the flames; and the bones and ashes were then gathered together in a sepulchral urn. The Jews, with haste, latterly, wrapped the body in linen, with spices and drugs, tending to

delay the course of corruption—and without inclosing it in a coffin, placed the cold limbs in some tomb, generally hollowed out in the rocky land of their inheritance. The Primitive Christians used to lay the body under the earth, either in a grave or vault formed for the occasion. And, meeting afterwards at the tomb of those who had been martyrs, they seemed to catch the hallowed association of the communion of saints: and when they had rest from their enemies, erected churches over these tombs to the honour of God, and called these Churches by the names of the Saints, who slept beneath, in Jesus. The Emperor Constantine was the first, who was buried within the Church, and his grave was in the porch; but the Church-yard around, has been for ages consecrated to God. Separated from unhallowed purposes, it receives the body as a *seed*, which in due time shall start to life a spiritual body; and meanwhile is defended and preserved in this garden of the Lord.

2. Having thus briefly alluded to the differing marks of reverence for the dead, paid in various ages and countries, let me now direct your attention to the funeral service of our Church. At the time of the Reformation, this service required some very great changes. The doctrine of purgatory, which represents souls as undergoing some purifying correction, in the unseen world, had so corrupted the Romish ritual, that a wide departure from that formulary was found necessary, in order to obtain a scriptural and edifying service.

Now the principle of our Burial Office is this,—*It is not for the benefit of the dead, but for the consolation and improvement of the living.* The greater part, by far, is taken out of Holy Scripture; and herein, especially in the use of the Psalms, we follow the primitive model. For thus speaks a very ancient author, describing the Christian mode of interment—"The Minister reads the infallible promises of our holy resurrection; and then we devoutly sing

the anthems of holy Psalms, which are on the same subject, and tend to the same purpose." To us, the cheerfulness of the early Christians, seems almost unnatural, in the burial of their dead. But we must remember, how fresh in their minds were all the miracles of the Saviour's life and resurrection; how perilous was their condition from day to day, owing to the persecutions of Heathenism; how strong was their faith, in the unseen life, and in the speedy return of Christ, to glorify His Church. Death seemed but as the removal of a screen, which concealed invisible peace and glory: and should they be sad, because their beloved ones were with Christ?

The service commences, as the dead body is borne first (in order to our remembering that we all are soon to *follow*), with that triumphant assurance of Christ, that *He* is the Resurrection and the life; and that the believer has been awakened from spiritual death by His grace, and shall surely pass from a world of pain

and sinfulness to one of joy and purity, through Him, who is the head of the Body. When *faith* has thus been strengthened, by the promise of Jesus, who spake these words to the mourning sisters of Lazarus : when *hope* has been quickened, by the glorious prospect, of the Redeemer, standing at the latter day upon the earth ; and of the body, (soon to be destroyed by worms,) coming to life again, so that in our flesh we shall see God—then, has *Patience* her perfect work, in remembering that as “ we brought nothing into the world, so neither may we carry any thing out : ” and calling to mind the enjoyment we have had in that which was given, rather than indulging our sorrow in what has been lost, we exclaim, in adoring submission, “ Blessed be the name of the Lord ! ”

The corpse now resting in the Sanctuary, where lately perhaps the soul was glad when they said, We will go into the house of the Lord, the 39th or 90th Psalm is solemnly read. The for-

mer of these, composed by the Prophet David, on Absalom's death, describes the agony of pain experienced in repressing grief before the unpitying: it utters the sighing of a contrite heart, at the thought of our span-long life; it blames the folly of heaping up wealth, in those, who know not who shall gather riches, which *may* have cost the price of a soul; it sends forth prayer for mercy; it bewails the pilgrim condition of man upon earth; it breathes submission to the stroke of affliction, because it is God's doing. The latter, or 90th Psalm, was always regarded by the Jewish Church as the composition of Moses: it is said to have been written by the man of God, on the fatal sentence going forth from Heaven, that all above twenty years of age should die in the wilderness. It is remarkable how his mind passes, from contemplating the frail condition of man, to the Lord, as our refuge, from one generation to another. It is touching to observe how, after likening man

to a short-lived flower, which in the morning is green, and groweth up, in the evening is cut down, dried up, and withered—His inspired mind seeks the moral of this sad tale in the prayer, that we “may so number our days as to apply our hearts unto true wisdom,” and be satisfied with the mercy of God, and that soon, to the rejoicing of our souls. The Psalm ended, that sublime lesson from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians is read. Beginning with the assurance of Christ being risen from the dead, the apostle draws a parallel between the injury inflicted on the earth, by the first Adam, and the glory provided for man, by the second Adam. He takes a rapid survey of the general resurrection. He points to Christ as the first fruits, and declares the cheering truth, that before the final sentence of judgment, they that are Christ’s shall be raised at His coming. THEN, cometh the end, when the kingdom of the Mediator (its great purpose having been answered) shall be delivered up into

the hands of the Father; and God shall be all in all. The Apostle next condescends to answer some objections to the doctrine of a resurrection of the body. What should induce Christians to press forward to martyrdom, and new converts to be baptized in the place of the dead, if there were no security of a blessed life after this? If, even in this world, we see bodies so variously constituted, on the earth, in the deep, in the air above, where is the difficulty to the Creator, of raising the dead? Is it harder to restore, than to create? Sown now like a seed in the earth, it must there decay, till the new principle take effect: and then, what was once corruption will be found incorruption, weakness will be found power, mortal shall put on immortality. He reveals the stupendous truth, that, at the great day, they who are alive shall not pass through death, but shall be suddenly changed. The trumpet shall be sounded by an Archangel, and the dead shall be raised, and death shall be swallowed up

in victory. Well then may the Redeemed of the Lord take up the Apostle's exclamation, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" and return thanks to the Lord Jesus, who hath taken away the sting from death, by making it a passage to Glory; and destroyed the condemning sentence of the law, by His dying for our sin, and rising again for our justification.

From the courts of the Lord's house, the mournful procession now passes to the grave. How simply, yet solemnly, are we reminded, in allusion to the confession of Jacob to Pharaoh, and to the beautiful simile of St. James, that man born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery; that he cometh up and is cut down like a flower; that he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay! How affectingly at such a time, in such a place, under such circumstances, are we instructed, that, in the midst of life we are in death; and that there is none, to whom

we can look for succour, but, that blessed Lord, who, for our sins is justly displeased at us ! Yet, that Holy Lord, that merciful Saviour, that most worthy Judge eternal is intreated to rescue us from the bitter pains of death. He, that knoweth the very secrets of the heart, is implored, with repeated cries and strong supplications, to spare us, to shut not His merciful ears to our prayers, and not to suffer us at our last hour, through any pains of death, to fall from Him.

For creatures, so much addicted to the things of sense as we are—it is hard to fix our thoughts on the soul, rather than the body. We shed a gloom over death with dark clothing, and sable plumes ; and excite our feelings, and torture our imagination with these funereal associations, when we should rather, be fancying the happy spirit—if departed in the faith of Jesus—at peace before the Lord ; holding converse with the blessed Martyrs, Apostles, and Saints of every age, beyond the pressure of pain and sorrow, temptation and trespassing.

Yet, with all the aid which our holy religion can bring, it is an agonizing moment, when we stand beside the deep, dark grave of relative or friend; and feel, that all the charms of his society, and the tenderness of affection, and the power of his example, and the sound advice, and the fondness of look, are no longer to be enjoyed within this vale of tears. While the dear body (which, in spite of ourselves, we cannot help feeling is the person we have lost) is lowered into the earth, and the hollow and startling sound, on the coffin lid, of earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, falls on the ear—tears will flow. At the grave of a friend, whom He was about to raise in a few moments, “*Jesus wept.*” But, in that hour, struggle to give *faith* its full exercise! Pray that thy soul may be established, in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life! Look unto Jesus, whose mighty office it will be to change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, ac-

ording to the mighty working, whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

We hear, as it were, a voice from Heaven, saying—"From henceforth (not sleeping till the day of final judgment, but, *from henceforth*) blessed are the dead—which die in the Lord: even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours."

Wherever the Lord's Prayer is introduced, it should be offered up, in connection with the subject of the prayers combining with it. And how must the heart respond to prayers, especially for God's will to be done, under this bereavement; and for Christ's kingdom to come, in which the true disciples of Jesus, re-united in purer and perpetual bonds, shall follow the Lamb, whithersoever He goeth! Our Church under the guidance of Scripture, hesitates not to pronounce, that the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, are alive in Paradise:—She speaks comfortably, pronouncing that the souls of the faithful, after being delivered from the burden of

the flesh, *are* in joy and felicity. She requires us to render thanks to the Lord, for the deliverance of our brother or sister, here departed, from the miseries of a sinful world. And the Lord is besought to hasten the time of His coming, and to accomplish the number of His elect, that we, with all who have departed this life in His faith and fear, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in His eternal kingdom. The concluding prayer, or collect of all the chief topics of faith, and patience, and comfort, is indeed a sublime composition. If it be objected, that the hope expressed in every case is too strong, be it remembered, that there are various *degrees* of hope; and there is a hope of *charity* and *sympathy* no less than of assurance:—and that, when Church discipline is somewhat restored; (if ever it be) for those, who are not in full communion with the Church, the most solemn ministrations would be in vain demanded.

The invocation of the Father, in this con-

cluding petition, is as nourishing to faith, as the latter portion is soothing to the bleeding hearts of the surviving friends. While, our God is addressed as the Father of that Saviour who is the resurrection and the life ; while, from the words of inspiration,—our mother, the Church, enjoins on us, not to be sorry, as men without hope, for them that sleep in Jesus, we meekly pray to be raised from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. We humbly desire that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in Christ, as our hope (our earnest wish) is, this our brother doth ; and that at the general resurrection, we may hear that blessed sentence addressed to each of us, which the glorified Redeemer shall then pronounce on all that love and fear Him : “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.”

I. What a lesson of *humiliation* have we to learn, from the views of death, presented

to our minds, through the solemnities of this service! The curse of sin—"for "death passed upon all, in that all have sinned." "In Adam all die." The corruption of the body, under its most innocent, and most beautiful forms: "after our skin, worms will destroy the body" of all who hear me. Yea, of the dearest object, it must be said, soon after the fatal sentence has been passed, as by Abraham of Sarah; "Bury my dead out of my sight." We must think of death, as the actual punishment of sin, foreseen in all the descendants of Adam. Where is there room for pride? In a body that returns to dust, earth, and ashes; in a soul destined in itself to ruin, and only rescued by One, mighty to save? In a soul, which after the holy washing of the new birth, retains a tendency to follow after evil, rather than good? In a soul, that must be separated from the body, that each, by influences of glory, may be more fitted for the other? In your possessions will you vaunt yourself, when reminded that you

“brought nothing hither, and can carry away nothing?” In your endowments of mind, and imaginary attainments? when “every man living is altogether vanity.” O bear in mind the solemn lessons on which we have been meditating: and pray for grace to be afraid at the wrathful indignation of the Most High, lest He set our misdeeds before Him, and our secret sins in the light of His countenance, and He be angry, and all our days be gone, and we suddenly bring our years to an end, as a tale that is told.

II. Yet, in the midst of our sad reflections, refuse not to be comforted, “because they are not;” and though we have but a short time to live. Is it not unspeakable consolation to know, that the day on which Christian friends are parted from us, on *that day* shall they be with Jesus in Paradise? Listen not to those heathen dreams of sleep, for a soul! Did not St. Paul desire to depart, that he might be “with

Christ?" Would not his zeal have panted for the life of Methuselah, if the interval between death and the resurrection, were to have been torpor and inactivity? Rejoice to think, that they who are Christ's, by their union with Him, and the new nature derived from His Spirit, live with Christ. What saith the text? "*They rest from their labours.*" Their trials, their conflicts with temper, their outward temptations, their sensibilities of conscience, their separations, their anxieties, are ended; "and their works do follow them." Their works do not go before them, to make a meritorious claim, which one look from the Judge would cover with confusion. But they "*follow with them*¹," as proofs of the indwelling spirit, as marks of a mind assimilated to Christ, as preparations of soul for the enjoyment of a world of holiness, when that which is begun in grace, shall be perfected in glory. Lay this to thine own

¹ Bp. Jebb.

heart. In this is the Father glorified, that we bear much fruit ; *so* shall we be Christ's disciples—and if we be chastened, (yea, grievously) in the mean time, let us be cheered with the thought, that the Divine husbandman is pruning us, “ that we may bring forth more fruit.” Let not the hour of Death seem gloomy. Does the child dread the hour of meeting an honoured parent, when the close study of school is ended ? Does the affectionate wife shrink from the hour, when she is to be restored to the society of her beloved husband ? And shall we fear to die ? to be released from affliction, and confusion, and sin ? fear, to be admitted to the presence of Him, that loved us, and washed us in his own blood ; fear, to be made happy for evermore ?

III. In order to secure this, learn the lesson of *faith*. You know, that your days are numbered. The time is not distant to the youngest person, when, for such an one,

the coffin must be made, and the grave opened, and the mourners will go about the streets. You know it, more certainly, than that the sun will rise on the morning of to-morrow. Death is near to us all, more especially to the aged, and the declining. Any of us may be overtaken by a sudden death.

If these things are so, your only fear need be, lest you should be unprepared for your summons. And if any one before me, hath no well-grounded hope of salvation—if the life of such a one be opposed to the Gospel—or be an unprofitable mixture of the decencies of religion with a love for the world—then, you cannot be otherwise than unhappy: for if the pain of an hour be grievous, who can dwell with everlasting burnings, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched? But I call on you, in the name of Jesus, to turn unto Him—be reconciled to God in Christ. Your Redeemer liveth, to intercede that you may be spared. To-day if you will hear

His voice, harden not your heart : now is the accepted time. Though you were *dead* in trespasses and sins—yet can His grace from heaven, awaken and make you live, and give you a new power within, that you shall become dead to sin, hating it in every shape ; and alive unto righteousness, rejoicing in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, loving the law of the Lord, and all the day long, having your delight in it. Pray for that faith, which, while it pictures God as all holiness, presents Jesus as a most merciful Saviour. Pray to Him that knoweth the very secrets of the heart, to deliver you not into the bitter pains of eternal death ; but to spare you—to make you from this hour stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord—forasmuch as you know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Would you hear, how calm the end is of an humble, devout Christian, let me recite to you the death of him, whose sick bed we contemplated, when last we were here

assembled. I allude to the dying scene of the meek, learned, and spiritual minded Hooker. He seemed at his last hour, deep in contemplation, and not inclinable to discourse—but when he was asked the subject of his thoughts, he replied, that he was meditating the number, and the nature of angels, and their blessed order and obedience; without which, peace could not be in heaven; and O! that it might be so upon earth! “I have lived (said the expiring saint) to see that this world is made up of perturbations: and I have been long preparing to leave it—and gathering comfort for the dreadful hour of making my account with God, which I now apprehend to be near. And though I have loved Him in my youth, feared Him in mine age, and laboured to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man; yet, if Thou, O Lord, be extreme to mark what I have done amiss, who can abide it! And therefore, where I have failed, Lord, show mercy unto me; for I

plead not my righteousness—but the forgiveness of my unrighteousness—for His merits, who died to purchase pardon for penitent sinners. And since I owe Thee a death, Lord, let it not be terrible, and then take Thine own time. I submit to it. Let not my will, O Lord, but Thine be done.” After a short rest, he added, “God hath heard my petitions. I am at peace with all men, and He is at peace with me; and from that blessed assurance, I feel that inward joy, which this world can neither give, nor take from me. My conscience beareth me this witness—and this witness maketh the thoughts of death, *joyful*. I could wish to live, to do the Church more service, but I cannot hope it. My days are past, as a shadow that returns not.” More he would have spoken, but his spirits failed him; and after a short conflict between nature and death, a quiet sigh put a period to his last breath—and so he fell asleep ¹.

¹ Izaak Walton's Life of Hooker.

Can we read the peaceful end of this, and other holy Christians, and not say from our hearts, “May I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his¹?” May we be enabled so to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in life, that with St. Stephen, we may expectantly entreat the “Lord Jesus to receive our spirit²!”

I would indeed, that the customs of society admitted of more members of the family attending the last remains of the departed, to the grave. Many a heart might be religiously touched—and realize, under God’s grace, the coming hour of death. There would be less liability to that intemperance, which is said, at *such* an hour, still, occasionally, to be observed; and it would banish some of the mockery of woe, by the full presence of the real mourners.

My brethren, “the time is short.” “The Lord is at hand:” and before long—the Judge, with whom a thousand years are

¹ Numb. xxiii. 10.

² Acts vii. 59.

but as one day, will be on His throne—and the world standing to receive sentence to eternal blessedness, or sorrow, that shall never end. Let our faith be fixed on Jesus, as the only Saviour; and look unto Him for imparting such divine strength, as shall enable us to overcome, and sit down with Him on His throne. While we live, let us live unto the Lord—that when we die, we may die unto the Lord; living and dying, may we be the Lord's—and so, shall an entrance be ministered unto us, into that blessed abode—where, being admitted for Christ's sake, “we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on us, nor any heat. But the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall lead us unto fountains of living water, and God shall wipe away all tears for ever.”

¹ Rev. vii. 16, 17

SERMON XII.

ORDINATION SERVICES.

2 Cor. ii. 16.

“WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?”

IN the preface to the ordinal of the Church, it is broadly stated, as a received opinion, that “from the Apostles’ time, there have been these orders of ministers in Christ’s Church — Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. And these offices have evermore been had in such reverend estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by public

prayer, with imposition of hands, approved and admitted thereunto with lawful authority." In accordance with this established judgment of antiquity, three several offices were provided, by the wisdom and piety of the Reformers, respect being had to the several services for ordination, in the eastern, western, and other ancient branches of the Church. The leading features in this office, I shall now present unto you, that you may see how greatly the ministers of God need your intercessions; and how fully justified was an Apostle in using that humble ejaculation, "Who—is sufficient for these things?"

THE ORDERING OF DEACONS.

The order of Deacons probably arose from that appointment of the "seven men of good report and full of the Holy Ghost and faith," who being, at first, set apart by the Apostles, for a particular ministration of charity, afterwards, became regular

helpers in the Church. The office corresponded with that of the *Levite* in the former dispensation; and harmonized, in the inferiority of rank, with the *seventy*, who were appointed subordinate to the Apostles, by “the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.” The age of twenty-three having been attained, and a preparatory course of study observed, such as, upon due examination, warrants the admission of the young minister, he is presented to the Bishop, in this form: “Reverend father in God, I present unto you this person to be admitted Deacon.” But the cautionary voice of the Church is immediately heard from the lips of her ruling Pastor, “take heed that the person be apt, and meet for learning and godly conversation, to exercise his ministry duly to the honour of God, and the edifying of his Church.” After that the assurance is given by him, that has enquired and examined, that he believes him so to be, yet is a further appeal made to the congrega-

tion present, entreating any one, in the name of God, to come forth, and declare if there be any notable crime or impediment lying against him. If no objection be made, the usual prayers of the morning service are offered up, with an especial addition, that the Lord would be pleased to pour His grace upon the candidate, so that he may be enabled duly to execute his office, to the edifying of the Church, and the glory of God's name.

In the collect for the occasion, our Almighty God, who by his Divine Providence hath appointed divers orders of ministers in the Church, is entreated to replenish this His servant with the truth of His doctrine, and to adorn him with innocency of life; that both by word and good example, he may faithfully serve the Lord in the office to which he is called. While the Epistle sets forth the seriousness, sincerity, temperance and unambitious mind, which should shine forth in the Deacons; while the corresponding duties

of their Wives, in the exercise of charity, simplicity and faithfulness, are described ; the Gospel (usually read by a deacon) proclaims the constant watchfulness, and devotedness to his heavenly Master's service, which should adorn the mind of one, professedly relinquishing the world, that he may turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God.

But previously to this reading of the gospel, (his first act of celebration of the divine service) he is required to make certain declarations of civil and ecclesiastical subjection, as excluding all foreign interference in matters of religion. He then most solemnly declares his trust—that he is moved by the Spirit of God, to take upon him this office, in order to the promotion of God's glory ; and avows his belief of being truly called, according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, to this ministry. His faith in the canonical Scriptures is openly testified ; and a promise is exacted, that he will, the Lord being his helper,

diligently read the Scriptures unto the people assembled in the Church, unto which he is appointed to serve. The Bishop then proceeds to set before him the nature of the duties which he is bound to discharge, as a Deacon; namely, assistance to the Priest, as in other parts of the service, so especially in administering the Holy communion, reading Scripture and homilies in the Church, giving instruction to youth in the catechism, baptising infants in the Priest's absence, and preaching, if he receive a license from his Ordinary. An active spirit of charity among the poor and infirm, and all deference to the responsible minister of the cure, being further insisted on, as habits to be cultivated with a glad and willing heart, his vow is made in the strength of the Lord God.

But as, without personal holiness, the most imposing array of public acts are little worth, the candidate now binds himself to frame and fashion his own life and those of his household, according to the

standard of the Gospel, so that they be wholesome examples to the flock of Christ. And having finally pledged himself to render due obedience to his ordinary and other ministers bearing jurisdiction over him, he receives, on his bended knees, the sacred title to the Deaconship in these memorable words—the Bishop laying his hands on his head: “Take thou authority to execute the office of a Deacon in the Church of God, committed unto thee, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Take thou authority to read the Gospel in the Church of God, and to preach the same, if thou be licensed thereto by the Bishop.”

With these words, which, to the last moment of life, must thrill in the ears of him that has knelt before God at such a moment, and received such a commission, there is delivered into his hands by the Bishop, the volume of the New Testament. And the body and blood of Christ being devoutly received, in token of fidelity

from man, and enabling grace from God, the incense of prayer ascends, that the servant of the Lord, who is now offering himself, may be constant in his ministrations, humble and modest, and having a ready will to observe all spiritual discipline : that so, he may “purchase to himself a good degree¹”, and be found worthy of being called into the higher ministries of Christ.

ORDERING OF PRIESTS.

It commonly happens, that some are received into the higher grade of the Church, at the same period that others are seeking an entrance into the duties of the Deacon's office. And it is an interesting contrast of mind, between those, who, having already been engaged in the good warfare as Deacons, are ambitious of a more advanced station in the camp; and those, who, as yet little aware of the con-

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 13.

flicts and discouragements attendant on such a warfare, are panting to fight the good fight of faith, under "the great Captain of their salvation." But even after a year's probation, the same warning voice of spiritual authority guards against a hasty admission into the more responsible office belonging to the Priest¹, and again calls upon all, to give notice of any offence that may have been committed in his year of probation, or before, operating against his reception into the situation desired. The Epistle from the 4th Ephesians, describing the rich diversity of gifts which adorned the Christian Church in its early state, is followed by an extract from one of the Gospels, either describing the magnitude of the harvest and the fewness of the labourers; or the duties of a Christian shepherd, in imitation of Christ the great Pastor of the fold.

¹ The term Priest is of Greek origin, and is the contracted form of Presbyter or elder.

An address is next delivered by the Bishop, seated within the altar, to the candidates for the Priesthood standing around, of a most instructive, arousing, and consolatory character. They are reminded in this, of the dignity and importance of the office, unto which they are called, as messengers, watchmen, stewards of the Lord. It is deeply impressed on them, how they must teach, premonish, feed, provide for the Lord's family. What a charge lies upon them, to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children in this naughty world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever. They are intreated to have always printed in their remembrance, how great a treasure is committed to their charge—sheep purchased at no less a cost than their shepherd's life; and what an honour, in attendance on the spouse, the body of Christ, is granted them. How terrific is the admonition following, (yea, after many years have rolled away,) that if the Church, or any member shall

take hurt by their negligence, the fault is great ; the punishment which will ensue, horrible. They must never cease their care, labour and diligence, until all entrusted to their charge, are brought to such ripeness of faith and perfectness of knowledge, as that no room shall be left for error in religion, or viciousness in life.

Having thus fully exhibited the nature, the dignity, and the responsibility of the ministerial office, the remainder of this heart-searching exhortation consists of advice in girding themselves for their high duty. Most solemnly are they reminded, that a will and ability, answerable to such a call, can come from God alone, and must earnestly be prayed for : that such a work as the salvation of man can in no wise be accomplished, but through the remedy of the divine word. Hence the infinite obligation, to read and learn the scriptures, and to frame their manners, and those of all pertaining to them, according to the revealed standard. Hence, ought they to

set aside, as much as possible, all worldly cares and studies, and apply themselves wholly to this one thing. Thus, by constant weighing of the Holy Scriptures, and continual prayer to God, through the mediation of the only Saviour, they are encouraged to hope, that they shall wax riper and stronger in the ministry, and become wholesome and godly examples for the people to follow. As was the Candidate for the first office, so, he that seeketh the Priesthood, is required publicly to declare his motives, his faith, his resolutions of obedience, before obtaining admission. He avows his conviction that he has been called, according to the Lord's will. He professes belief in the fulness and certainty of holy Scripture; resolving, by the grace of God, to teach nothing, as necessary for salvation, but what may be concluded and proved thereby. His vow is uttered, that he will minister the doctrine, the Sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, according to the commands of the Lord, inter-

preted by the Church. *The Lord being his helper*, he binds himself to drive away all erroneous doctrine ; and both unto the sick and the whole, within his cure, to use public and private monition and exhortation, as occasion shall be given. In prayer, and meditation, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh, he promises, in the divine strength, to be diligent, to exhibit a safe example to his flock, to promote order, quietness, and peace ; and to submit to the godly judgment of those invested with ecclesiastical authority over him. Then, does the Bishop pray the Almighty, to grant him strength and power to fulfil these high duties, and accomplish the work begun in him :—and silence being kept, that the congregation may secretly commend the candidates to the grace of God, the descent of the Spirit, in his sanctifying gifts, is desired in words simple and venerable from their antiquity : after which, renewed prayer being made for Christ's kingdom to be

enlarged, and glorified, by the labours of those now set apart, the commission is granted to each, meekly kneeling on his knees, in these words—"Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church, now committed unto thee, by imposition of hands: whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the word of God, and of His holy Sacraments. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." These words being spoken, the Presbyters laying on their hands, together with the Bishop, the Bible is placed in the hand of the newly ordained priest with this parting charge. "Take thou authority to preach the word of God, and to minister the Holy Sacraments in the congregation, where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto."

CONSECRATION OF BISHOPS.

This is not the place for proving, that

the form of governing the Church by Episcopal authority, is derived from Scripture. No *other* mode is alluded to in the New Testament, (according to the interpretation of the Church) or practised by the Christian body for *fifteen centuries*; and we should fear, in a work of Divine Grace, to countenance innovation: and rather rejoice, the nearer that we approximate to the inspired system.

The election of Bishops was, after the times of the Apostles, in the nomination of the Clergy and people. But, as in all popular elections, favoritism, prejudice, and tumult are found to prevail—on the empire becoming Christian, the ruling powers were generally consulted: and after choice being made, three or four Bishops, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, transmitted the high power of setting apart others to the ministry. That one Bishop also had pre-eminence in a province, over a certain number of Bishops, although the *title* of Archbishop may not

occur before the fourth century, is plain from the early fact, of "Irenæus (seventy years from the time of St. John,) superintending all the Bishoprics in France." Our Saxon monarchs conferred the nomination to this dignity, in right of having founded the See. After the conquest, the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral decided on the successor, when a Bishopric became vacant, subject to the confirmation of the English Monarch, or Bishop of Rome, as their respective power chanced to prevail. In the reign of Henry VIII., the king renewed the claim of nomination to a vacant see, under the form of recommending to the Dean and Chapter, a fit person to be consecrated. The royal nomination is not binding, without this ratification of the Cathedral. But by their submission to the annexed penalties, on refusal to accept the nomination, security is provided against an unworthy person being admitted to this high office.

The Bishop is to be considered a suc-

cessor and representative of the Apostles. The Fathers designate the Apostles, Bishops; and the Bishops—Apostles. And St. Cyprian maintains that, “as a ship cannot be steered without a helmsman, or a flock fed without a shepherd, so neither can the Church be ruled without a Bishop.”

In the Collect for the Communion Service, prayer is offered up for all Bishops and Pastors of the Church, that they may diligently preach the word, and duly administer the Godly discipline thereof; and that the people may obediently follow the same, that all may receive the crown of everlasting glory. The Epistle, from that of St. Paul to Timothy, enforces the high and holy duties of the pastoral office: or that most tender and instructive charge delivered by the Apostle, in his episcopal character, to the elders of the Ephesian diocese, at Miletus, is recited: while the Gospel recounts the proof of love, exacted by Christ, in that impressive admonition to St. Peter, “Feed my sheep;” or, the subject is taken

from that mysterious appearance of the risen Lord to the eleven, when he imparts to them their divine commission, and bestows an earnest of richer grace in the communication of the Holy Ghost, from himself. He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Another portion of Scripture is used at discretion, containing Christ's final bequest of divine authority to His Apostles as a corporate body; and the assurance of His spiritual presence with the Church, even to the end of the world.

The Bishop elect is now presented by two of his brethren unto the Archbishop in these words, "Most Reverend Father in God, we present unto you this godly and well learned man to be ordained and consecrated Bishop." And, habited at first only in the linen rochet, he promises on oath to render all due reverence and obedience to the Archbishop, as supreme Bishop of the province, and his successors. The congregation are next reminded of the Lord Jesus continuing a whole night in prayer,

before that He ordained His Apostles ; they are called on to remember how the Apostles fasted and prayed, before they laid hands on Paul and Barnabas ; and they are exhorted to fall to prayer, before the admission of any to such a trust, in his behalf ; and the Lord is afterwards besought to send His grace upon him, to the edification of the Church ; to replenish him with truth of doctrine, and innocency of life, that he may glorify the name of the Lord. But not unto this awful sphere of sacred duty is the Bishop admitted, until he has openly, in the hearing of all, avowed his persuasion of a just call, his conviction of the truth and infinite importance of the Bible, his resolution to instruct from the oracles of God, to exercise himself in prayer and devout meditation, to resist the encroachment of false doctrine, to be an example of good works, to promote peace and love, to correct vice within his diocese, to be faithful in the ordination and mission of others, and to show himself gentle and merciful

for Christ's sake to the needy, the stranger, and the destitute. Most humbly does he profess his entire and exclusive reliance on the help of God, for attaining unto this grace, and fervently is prayer offered to Him that enableth, to give power and accomplishing strength from above. The Divine Comforter is invoked, with His gifts of gracious inspiration, of light, of love, and support. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is besought, that this, His servant, may evermore be ready to spread abroad His Gospel, (the glad tidings of reconciliation with God,) and that he may have grace to use his authority, not for destruction, but for edification; to help and not to hurt; so that as a wise and faithful servant, giving the members of his Lord's family, each, their portion of meat in due season, he may at last be received into everlasting joy.

Never was there a sight more truly imposing—from the simple sanctity of the scene—from the holy association with all

that is venerable and of divine origin in the Church, than that which follows. To behold, by faith, Christ present with the Church ; to realize the ever-living Saviour giving validity to this sacred commission, and blessing those who are appointed to bless in His name ! And while the Archbishop and Bishops lay their hands on the head of the elected Bishop, the Archbishop solemnly pronounces these words, "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Bishop, in the Church of God, now committed unto thee, by the imposition of our hands—In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. And remember, that thou stir up the grace of God which is given thee, by this imposition of our hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and soberness."

Most weighty is the exhortation that follows, when the Bible is placed in his hands, to seek after piety, and studiousness, and faithful teaching. To take heed to him-

self and to the doctrine; to be unto the flock of God a shepherd, not a wolf; to hold up the weak, to heal the sick, to bind up the broken, to bring again the outcast, to seek the lost, to be so merciful as not to be remiss, and so to administer discipline as not to forget mercy—this is the pure and elevated range of duty set before the servant of God, “looking unto Jesus,” and waiting for that day, when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, and bestow a never-fading crown of glory on all that love Him. The intercessions for the newly ordained Bishop are summed up, after partaking of the Holy Communion of Christ, in these most impressive desires—that he may be endued with the Holy Spirit; and in preaching God’s word, may not only reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all patience, but be a wholesome example in word, in conversation, in love, in faith, in chastity and purity—that he may faithfully fulfil his course before the great Judge, who liveth with the Father and the Spirit, one God.

You see, brethren, from this view of the ordination service, how sacred and important a duty lies on us, as messengers, watchmen, stewards of the Lord. It is, in some measure, your fault, if any are admitted, who are unworthy of the sacred office ; since you are called upon “ in the name of God,” to protest against any being received into holy orders, who stand justly charged with any notable crime, or impediment. It is a mercy to the soul of such an one—a mercy to the souls of those, for whom he will become answerable, to step forth, and stay his reception into the most awful of trusts. It lies much with you, also, to hinder, or promote our usefulness, in the sacred embassy. If ye will not receive the truth, when it is preached simply in Jesus ; but desire novelties, originality, eloquent appeals, instead of seeking after edification in the prayers, and listening to the Scripture plainly and earnestly expounded, ye are laying a temptation and a snare in the way of the weak-minded. Some can-

not endure doctrinal preaching: others stigmatize all practical application, as legal. Favoritism is too much encouraged, as if Paul and Apollos could “give the increase,” as well as “plant and water!” In some congregations, the demand on the time of the clergyman is so great, for mixing in society and the concerns of life, that he must either give offence, by rendering unto God, that time which is God’s; or he must be compelled to break that vow, whereby he pledged himself to read daily, and meditate on, the sacred volume; and to give himself to such studies as shall help to the same, and to lay aside the study of the world, and the flesh. “Meditate on these things; give thyself WHOLLY to them ¹.”

How, again, can we with faithful diligence, minister the Sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, if no opportunities be afforded for pastoral communication? if the communicant presents

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 15.

himself at the altar, without the sanction and encouragement of his minister? How can we, in populous districts, visit the sick, as ministers, if we are not even apprized of their infirm condition? How can we edify them that are whole, when our parishes are so large, that we can scarcely reckon the number of inhabitants?

To do this great work effectually, we must be permitted to lead comparatively retired lives. In our visits, we must be allowed occasionally, to aim at elevating the tone of conversation to some subject above the passing interests of the day. We must be allowed the regulation of our time and habits, in such sort, as that we may gird ourselves, at a moment's notice, for the solemn ministrations belonging to our calling. Will you take offence at our well meant warning in private and public? Our affectionate rebuke, our sincere exhortation? Will you not remember that we "watch for your souls, as they that

must give account¹." Can we, through life, recall that solemn admonition, without trembling, "if *any* member shall take any hurt or hindrance through you—you know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment which will ensue." Hear the word of the Lord, "When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if *thou* dost not speak to warn the wicked man from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand²."

Contemplate for a moment, the agonizing meeting in another world, between the false and careless pastor, and the soul that has been destroyed through his negligence! Urge us not, against our conscience, to forsake that course of life, which alone is compatible with a high sense of our office, and a faithful discharge of its duties.

Gladden our hearts by devout, regular

¹ Heb. xiii. 17.

² Ezek. xxxiii. 8.

attendance on the holy sabbath, and let not the fire of the altar be extinguished on the week-day services, for want of the presence of those members in families, who can in so many cases be spared; and will hardly be able, twice in the week, to spend three quarters of an hour, with more profit to the soul.

Let me beseech you to pray for us, that both by our preaching and living, we may set forth the power of the Gospel. If the great Apostle of the Gentiles found it needful to call on his congregations to intercede for him at the throne of grace, O! how greatly must we require the help of the Lord. Consider what a work it is, to “open men’s eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God¹.” To instruct the ignorant, to arouse the careless, to unmask the hypocrite, to strengthen the timid, to raise up the fallen, to train the young, to prepare the dying

¹ Acts xviii. 26.

for their presently meeting the Lord—
“Who is sufficient for these things?” Unless that Spirit be invoked incessantly, by whose grace, we, the poor instruments of His hand are empowered, how shall the enemies against whom we have to contend, be baffled and overthrown! “For we wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places ¹.” Pray for us, that we may withstand such enemies, “and having done all,” be able “to stand.”

Remember that the effectiveness of a pastor's ministrations must always, in some measure, depend on the simplicity, zeal, and constancy of his congregation.

Be forbearing in your judgment; for we “are men of like passions with yourselves,” engaged in a holy and arduous conflict. Accept us, according to the gifts which

God hath bestowed on every man. Waste not our spirits, by capricious preference of some new preacher, more captivating in style and manner; but less eager for your salvation, than your own shepherd. Let your families be training places for the house of God, that the service of the sanctuary may be more readily understood, and brought home to the heart. Meditate on what is heard at the Church. Co-operate, in every work of piety and charity, with the clergyman: and should you differ from him in some views, it is he who is answerable before God; and he therefore should be allowed to decide in a controverted question. Suffer him to be entangled, as little as possible, with the secular concerns of his parochial cure. Help him by kindness, and by prayer, that he may "take heed to himself, and to the doctrine," that "in so doing, he may both save himself and them that hear him¹."

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 16.

SERMON XIII.

COMMINATION SERVICE.

JEREM. x. 24.

“ O LORD, CORRECT ME, BUT WITH JUDGMENT: NOT
IN THINE ANGER, LEST THOU BRING ME TO
NOTHING.”

THE Commination Service, which will form the last subject in our course, derives its title, from the denouncing of God's anger and judgment against sinners. The minister, in the opening address, refers to the custom existing in the Primitive Church, that such persons, as stood convicted of notorious sin, were, at the beginning of Lent, put to open penance. They were punished in this world, that their souls

might be saved in the day of the Lord; and that others, admonished by their example, might be the more afraid to offend.

As the subject of the Primitive Church has been often referred to, in this series of Lectures, I shall avail myself of the present opportunity, to give a very short account of the early Christians, as they existed under that form of sacred government founded by our Lord, and transmitted through the Apostles, under divine guidance.

I. The Primitive Church did not consist of a number of Christians, differing in opinion as to the truths and administration of the Gospel. As there was "one Lord," so was there "one faith, one baptism." The Primitive Church was a Society, regularly governed. It consisted of various branches. There was the Church of Jerusalem; that of Antioch; that of Corinth;

and others settled by the Apostles, or their missionaries, throughout the world. But it was *one Church*, as much as a tree is one, though stretching out its various branches from different parts of the ascending trunk. It was Catholic, in the true sense of the word—that is, universal. What was believed in one, was believed in all. It gathered from all nations, and classes; “high and low, rich and poor, one with another ¹.” It was a large family, scattered abroad, but guided by the same rules, principles and spirit. The bond of union was so strong, that from the lips of heathen prejudice, was extorted that glorious attestation to their imbibing the mind that was in Christ Jesus—“See how these Christians love one another!” If more remarkable for the exercise of some than other virtues they were these—Devotion, in private, in their family, in the public observance of the Lord’s Day, and other

¹ Ps. xlix. 2.

Festivals, as well as appointed Fasts; humility, patience, charity, temperance, and purity.

And great must have been the contrast presented in such a city as Rome, or Corinth, herein, to the idolatry, unbridled lust, fierce vengeance, luxury, pride, and worldly mindedness, reigning without a check, under a scheme of *religion*, of which *morals* formed no essential part. The deep impression of the Redeemer's atoning death, the consciousness, by inward grace and outward miracle, of the Comforter's presence amongst them, the undefined idea in the minds of many (though corrected by Scripture,) that the second coming of the Lord was immediately at hand,—these, and other elevating feelings, tended to separate the follower of Jesus from an untoward generation. To this, much influence was added from the brutal persecutions which disgraced the earth for three hundred years. To know, that you were liable, on almost any day, to be dragged to death from the

bosom of your family; and that if you publicly avowed your belief in the Saviour before the magistrate, your sentence was, whatever the cruelty, or caprice, of the judge might determine—this fear kept false professors far away from a religion of so much peril, and rendered the true disciple watchful, and stedfast. It was this liability to death, which introduced the custom of sponsors; lest the parents should leave their children, without any security to the Church, for their being brought up in the faith, when they themselves were cast to the lions, torn asunder by trees, crucified, beheaded, or burned. They “worked out their salvation with fear and trembling¹.” They were often compelled to meet at the earliest hour, for worship, and in the most retired places. And into these holy assemblies would the savage spy exultingly intrude; and springing on his prey, bear away some new victims of oppression. The

¹ Phil. ii. 12.

aged almost ready to depart in peace, the agonized wife, the tender virgin, the child, were in turn made the mockery of a brutal rabble; and after every species of indelicate insult that could be offered, were mangled and tortured to death.

“Fear not them which kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do¹ :” thus spake the greatest of sufferers upon earth. His word of warning was not heard in vain. By faith, they saw the Lord Jesus “standing,” as ready with succour, “at the right hand of God²,” and exhorting, “be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life³ :” and they would court the pains and the glory of martyrdom, with a zeal and perseverance, which, at length, it became needful to repress.

But, we must not deceive ourselves in supposing that sinful fallen man, even under such a pressure of feelings and circumstances, tending to purify and establish

¹ Matt. x. 28.

² Acts vii. 56.

³ Rev. ii. 10.

the soul, did not, in many cases, betray the depravity of the old Adam. The enthusiast and the hypocrite, the worldly, the backslider, and the inconsistent, were to be found, even in the primitive fellowship. But they were not allowed to remain, undiscovered, in its bosom, a snare and a disgrace. There was discipline in the Church, in those days. The Apostles invested succeeding Bishops with the power of ordaining presbyters and deacons, for the edification of Christ's flock. There is not indeed a case on record, in the purest age of the Gospel, of any being ordained, except by a Bishop. And the Pastors were not only set apart to expound the Scripture, to conduct the devotions, and, above all, to administer the Sacraments, but, to *rule over* the Church, in the name of their Lord. The presbyter and the deacon acted *with differing and delegated portions of the Bishop's authority*; and represented him, in the exercise of this duty. Whenever any false opinions arose, they were tried by a

reference to Holy Scripture, interpreted and witnessed to, by that form of sound words, which was devoutly provided in the Creed and Liturgy, by Apostles, or apostolic men. And forthwith the obstinate offender was cast out of the Church, and considered as cut off from the benefits of Christ's death, by virtue of that ever present sanction—"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven¹." Whenever any scandal arose to the Church, from the proved sin of any member, he was expelled the congregation, until he acknowledged his offence, and gave proofs of sincere penitence and faith in his Saviour. It was not in his power, while the UNITY of the Church was deemed a prime object of regard, to attach himself to another congregation, in all the fancied triumph of scornful defiance for the one, by which he had been ejected. The rulers, being always duly apprized of the misconduct of the excommunicated member, durst not,

¹ Matt. xvi. 19.

would not, receive him, until he was restored by the grace of God, operating in humiliation and amendment. The expelled member of the Church became as though he belonged not unto Christ. It was not permitted him to join in prayer with the congregation of the Lord. He was debarred the Holy Sacrament, which in *those* days, Christians felt it the greatest punishment to be denied ¹. His society, while he lived in sin, was shunned by all Christians, who looked on him as in a state of rebellion against God: nor, if he died in an impenitent condition, and unreconciled to God, through Christ acting by his Church, could the service which spake of hope for the departed, be celebrated at his grave.

No difference was observed in the treatment of sin, on account of riches or rank. The Emperor Theodosius was, for eight

¹ Vide Article 33. Treatment of Excommunicate Persons in the Church of England.

months, refused admittance into the Church by St. Ambrose¹, in consequence of his giving way to violence and tyranny in the massacre of a number of his Thessalonian subjects. The Emperor pleaded the case of David : "Imitate him," exclaimed the faithful Bishop, "in his penitence, as well as in his sin." Nor was it until he had humbled himself to the dust before God, that this holy, fearless Bishop of Milan, permitted his imperial majesty to mingle again among the worshippers of the Lord, and to partake of the Lord's Supper.

When, to this imperfect sketch, has been added, the care taken in preparing grown persons for Baptism, the hospitality exercised towards travelling brethren, the integrity of their dealings, and truth of lips ; their cheerful and decorous accompanying of their deceased friends to the grave, their care of the sick, their consideration for the burial of the poor, their reverence for all in

¹ A.D. 360.

authority, their conscientious and ready payment, in obedience to their Divine Master's example, of *every* tax imposed by law:—we need not wonder at finding that, the pure lives of the early Christians, receiving reflected light from their meekly endured sufferings, so won by degrees upon the minds of all, that the emperors of Rome, in the fourth century, discovered, that if the Christians were to withdraw, the empire would become well nigh a wilderness; and they proclaimed the gospel of Jesus, the religion of the world.

II. This brief account will better enable us, to comprehend the wish expressed, in our service, for a revival of the ancient discipline. If the Church were to rise in primitive zeal and simplicity, and insist on a stricter governance of her members, what reasonable opposition could be offered, while, the Redeemer is spiritually with his Church; while, those words are on record, belonging to His Church, as an organized body, from

age to age, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me ¹." "I am with you, always, even unto the end of the world ²." "I give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven ³."—"Tell it unto the Church; and if he refuse to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man ⁴." Did not St. Paul blame the Corinthian Church for their sufferance of an impure member amongst them; and then command, to "put away from among themselves that wicked person?" It would seem that St. Paul had not more authority, as a *Governor of the Church*, than St. Timothy, and the other successors of his Episcopal office ⁵? As endowed with every variety of miraculous gifts, we look up to him in his pre-eminence. Before his inspiration, we bow with reverence. His divine eloquence ravishes and elevates our souls. In his rare combination of ardour, courage, perseverance, affection,

¹ Luke x. 16.

² Matt. xxviii. 20.

³ Matt. xvi. 19.

⁴ Matt. xviii. 17.

⁵ Vide Comber on Consecration of Bishops.

delicacy of feeling, and lowliness, we recognise one most richly endowed with grace : and we stand astonished before the man, that had been caught up into the third heaven, and heard unutterable things. But, in his *Episcopal* authority, abstractedly considered, and separate from his *peculiar powers as an Apostle*, we behold him, as a ruling Pastor, in no wise above the fathers of the Church, in succeeding ages, on whom the Apostolic mantle was to descend ; but partaking with them of the same authority from the Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls ¹. “Feed my sheep : Feed my lambs ².”

In the absence of stricter discipline, the Church has thought good to array all the terrors of the law before the mind of the sinner, in the service of *Commination*, or denouncing. She will have her people remember, that Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil ; not to weaken the

¹ Vide Comber ; as before. ² John xxi. 15, 16.

claims of holiness, but to obey perfectly, himself, and enable his people to obey; not to take to Himself a multitude of souls hoping for pardon, while cleaving to their sins—but, to purify them by a new life from His Spirit, issuing in the application of the highest hopes and holiest rules; and thus render “them a peculiar people, zealous of good works¹,” capable and desirous of enjoying the glorious holiness of His kingdom. And in order that the mind should be disposed for viewing the commandment in all its length and breadth, the Church has appointed, in obedience to the practice of the Primitive order, a season to be kept holy, immediately before Easter. A season it should be of comparative separation from the world; of serious examination, humble confession before God, and devout reliance on the blood of Jesus. In this service, to be used on the first day of the Lent fast, how awfully do the curses of Almighty God

¹ Tit. ii. 14.

sound in our ears, against sin ! And how tremendous is the *amen* of fallen creatures—not desiring that these outpourings of wrath may fall on any, but assenting tremblingly to these expressions of divine indignation. Idolatry, irreverence to parents, injustice, disregard of the afflicted, oppression of the helpless, secret fraud, adultery, bribery, attachment to the creature rather than the Creator, are solemnly denounced. And the fearful list is swelled from the Gospel, with the impure and uncharitable, the covetous and the slanderer, the blasphemer and drunkard. O forget not then the grace which enableth, in the mercy which blotteth out.

The address which follows, sets before the conscience, the danger of straying from the ways of the Lord ; and proclaims His overhanging judgments. And gracious are the words of encouragement which are added. If, in the former part, the terrific perils besetting a guilty soul, are written against us on the wall, the latter portion

assures us of the endless pity of our God and Saviour. The heart must be of flint, that is not aroused by the declarations of "the axe being ready to smite ; the fan to scatter us before the wind ; the snares, fire, brimstone, storm and tempest ready to descend." The mind is appalled by the fearful vision, of "falling into the hands of the living God ;" of the sudden coming of the Judge as a thief in the night ; of the refusal of the Lord to hearken unto them, that have hardened their hearts. Unto such obstinate rebels against the majesty of heaven, is it announced, that they may call ; but, the Lord will not answer ; that they may knock ; but, the door of mercy will be closed against them : and the whole is summed up, by the anticipated sound of that sentence, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ¹."

But, after all this overwhelming mani-

¹ Matt. xxv. 41.

festation of divine fury against wilful impenitence, how sweetly is heard the still small voice of mercy, intreating us, not to abuse the goodness of God, but to return to Him with a true and perfect heart. What a promise is *that*, from God, "Though your sins were as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow, though they be like purple, they shall become white as wool ¹." He, that gave strength to put forth the withered arm, commands, "Make you a new heart, and a new spirit;" and graciously inquires, "Why will ye die, seeing that I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." In what words of comfort are we invited to Christ! How feelingly are we assured, of His being our ready Advocate with the Father, of His being "wounded for our transgressions, and smitten for our wickedness." If we will but return unto Him, who is the merciful receiver of all penitent sinners; and

¹ Is. i. 18.

believe, that He is most willing to pardon, if we come with faithful repentance ; if from this day, we submit ourselves to Him, and walk in His ways, and take upon us His easy yoke, and be ordered by the governance of His Holy Spirit, seeking *His* glory,—then, as surely as the word of God is true, Christ will deliver us from the curse of the law ; and finally, command us to take possession of His glorious kingdom.

That psalm of deepest contrition, lowliest faith, and lively hope, the fifty-first, is then prayed by us, meekly kneeling on our knees. And, after the blessed Redeemer's own prayer, supplication is offered, that the Lord would spare all those who confess their sins, and absolve all, whose consciences are accused by sin. And He, the most mighty God, and merciful Father, who hath compassion upon all men ; hating nothing that He hath made, and willing that the sinner should turn from the error of his way, is importuned—to forgive, to

receive, to comfort, to make haste and help the wearied in heart, that we may live with God, through Christ, for ever.

And never was the idea more clearly and devotionally conveyed, than in the words of the prophet, that the Lord must turn us, else shall we never be turned. In the multitude of his mercies, is the good Lord besought to spare us, to look upon us, and bring us from confusion. Lastly, there sounds forth from the mercy seat, that gracious benediction—the Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord lift up His countenance on thee, and give thee peace now and for evermore.

Repentance is not so hard a work, where God is the Judge—Christ the Mediator—the Holy Spirit, the helper of souls; nor is salvation so inconsiderable an object, as that any should be discouraged, any should be indifferent in such a cause. Is it a light thing, to be eased of the pain

and sting of every sin? to have the sharp-pointed, and poisoned arrows drawn out; and the wounds of the conscience healed? Is it a thing to be despised, our being restored to the favour of God, our having peace with Him, by faith in Jesus? Is it a trifling concern, to have an *inward power* lodged in our hearts, whereby we shall be defended from the crafts of the evil one, and be enabled to say to each rebellious temper and passion, Peace, be still? Is it nought, to have a new principle of spiritual life implanted in us? to become the temples of the Holy Ghost, to be conformed to the image of Christ, and to secure an inheritance in the mansions of glory? What a merciful God we have to do with, who offers unto us His kingdom, on the easy terms of repentance and faith; empowering us, to obtain the very qualifications, which He requireth. A God that will make us eternally blessed, if we will but turn unto Him; and, following the godly motions of His sanctifying Spirit,

live like Christians and reasonable creatures. Every advance which we make in clearness of faith, and earnestness of repentance, is an actual increase to the soul, of peace and enjoyment ; while it makes us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. “And how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ¹?”

What excuse have the careless, the hardened, the inconsistent, the worldly—for not turning to this God of mercy? Why dost thou delay? The gate of mercy is open. The promise is to you ; for the Lord hath called you into His covenant. Are you deceiving yourself, by a determination to repent when you are older, or when some obstacle is removed? You will, at a “convenient season,” as you think, repent, and be a true Christian. Is life, then, at your own disposal? Or, have you the power, of disposing your heart favourably to God, at will? “No man *can* come unto Me, ex-

¹ Heb. ii. 3.

cept the Father which hath sent Me, draw him ¹." And can any look for these gracious influences from above, who resists, and does despite unto the only Giver of effectual grace? If you feel, that, without conversion of heart, you cannot be saved, and know, by sad experience, that your heart is not *yet* right in the sight of God, for what do you wait? For God's laws to change? Think you, that a new Gospel is likely to be revealed, according to which the *unrepenting* will be offered the blessings of pardon and peace? Know you not, that every hour the disease is neglected, the danger is increased? And with these convictions before you, that God only can change the heart,—that every life hangs over the abyss of eternity, by a thread—that sin, or a thoughtless course, indulged, makes your case more desperate—with these assurances from God, will you add to former provocations, by shutting

¹ John vi. 44.

your ears, once more, to His message of mercy? Remember, if you *will* perish—the warning has been heard, and the sin lieth at your own door.

Though the healing influences of the baptismal grace have been, as yet, slighted by many—though conversion, as from death unto life, be needed by some—the grace of *further* repentance is, in every case, necessary. Which of us has reached that high condition of holiness enabling us to say, with truth, “That wicked one toucheth me not¹?” Fear, and care, and watchfulness, are not to be neglected, to the last hour of life. According to our growth in the grace assigned us, will be the reward of glory—though it be a reward unmerited, and conferred on a pardoned sinner.

Let each of us labour, with unceasing care, to “make his calling and election sure²,” and to adorn the Gospel of his Lord, by an ever brightening and more

¹ 1 John v. 18.

² 2 Pet. i. 10.

established course. While I am bound to press the use of every means of grace, I am especially called upon by my subject, to entreat your attention to *prayer*. And I pray God, that His grace may have so accompanied the endeavours of His servant, that you may have seen, how great a treasure is committed to us in the Liturgy of our Church.

“Preach the word¹,” is a divine command, and must be honoured accordingly. But by your devoutly applying the Common Prayer, as a lesson from the Holy Spirit, there will be conveyed to your hearts, more edifying instruction than any that we can devise.

I now in conclusion, brethren, beseech you, oftentimes, to take up the Prayer-book, and to read over and meditate upon some confession of sin, some thanksgiving, some prayer for grace; and thus quicken and mature your own con-

¹ 2 Tim iv. 2.

trition, gratitude, faith, and devotion. Observe the simplicity of words and the depth of thought : the fervour of desire, and the reverence of expression. Such exercises of spiritual reflection before God, will make your union closer with the Lord Jesus ; and your heart will be opened to receive an increase of the comforting and guiding influences of the Spirit. You will be hereby more attracted to the Bible, the fountain of living truth. You will be taught to feel, that " God is a spirit ;" and when you worship Him, you will be led to " worship Him, in spirit and in truth ¹."

¹ John iv. 24.

THE END.

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Sermons on Book of C. Chayer.

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